

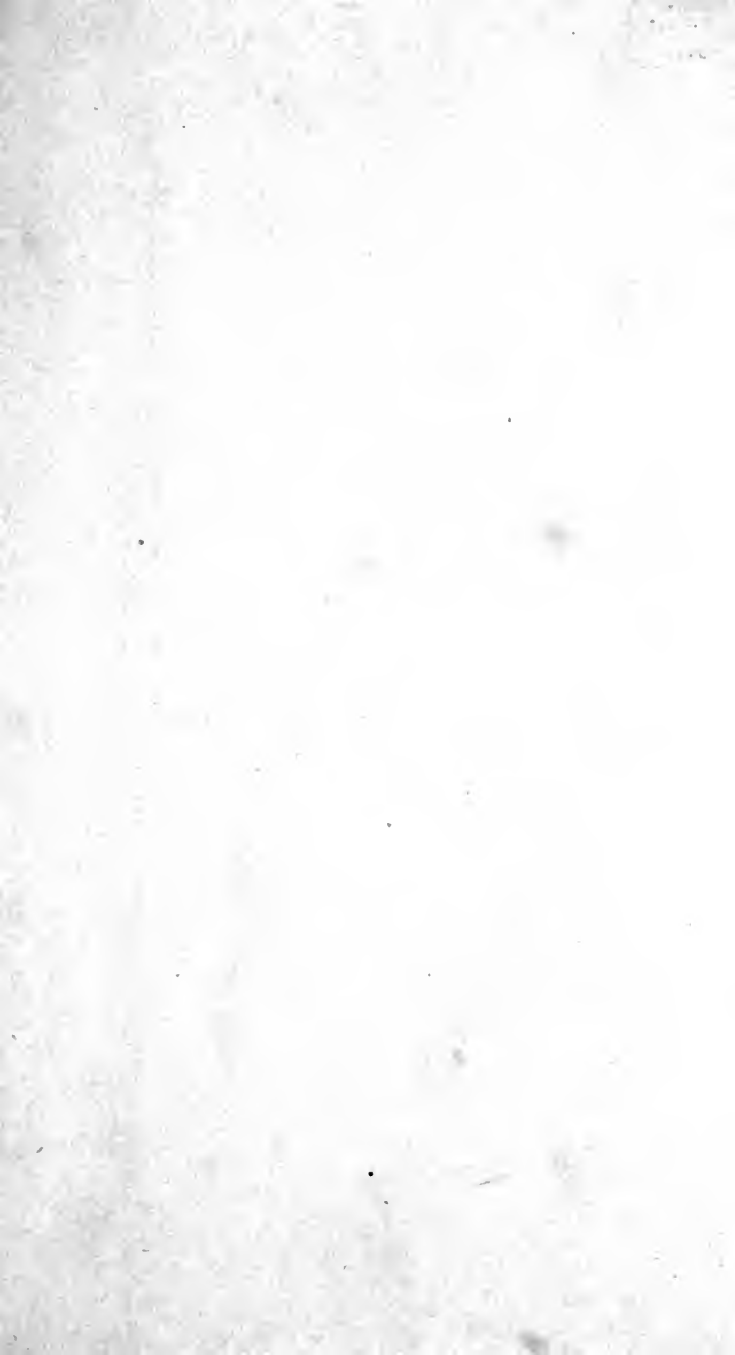


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JOHN OF ENGLAND.

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE.

BY HENRY CURLING,

AUTHOR OF

“THE SOLDIER OF FORTUNE.”

Now powers from home, and discontents at home,
Meet in one line; and vast confusion waits
(As doth a raven on a sick fallen beast),
The imminent decay of wrested pomp.
Now happy he whose cloak and cincture can
Hold out this tempest.
A thousand businesses are brief in hand.
And heaven itself doth frown upon the land.

KING JOHN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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JOHN OF ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

A RESCUE.

What! am I dar'd, and bearded to my face?—
Draw, men, for all this privileged place;
Blue coats or tawney coats.

A rope! a rope!—
Now beat them hence; why do you let them stay?
Thee I'll chace hence, thou wolf in sheep's array.—
Out, tawney coats!—out, scarlet hypocrite!

SHAKESPERE.

ISABELLA of Angoulême had not borne her husband an heir when the young Arthur was thus foully done to death; so that John, in destroying this scion of Plantagenet, had left himself the sole representative of that heroic race. The beautiful queen, who at this period suffered from frequent attacks of illness, was again absent from John's court, so that he had not the consolation of her society during the

first hours of remorse, after performing the dreadful deed narrated in our preceding chapter. The temper of the monarch, which we have already said was subject to periodical attacks of alternate deep gloom and outrageous violence, after the murder of Arthur became for a time so ungovernable, that few except the hired ruffians and mercenaries it was his pleasure to keep as his immediate guards and attendants, together with the villain Mauluc, cared to appear before him. In this state, secretly despised by mankind, he gave way to tempests of fury which seemed to unsettle his reason. He execrated all who appeared in his presence, struck his attendants, and even cursed the hour of his own birth, seizing his garments with his teeth, and tearing them with ungovernable rage, as if possessed by furies. In this situation of affairs, Mauluc took upon himself to despatch an escort for the Queen, hoping her presence might somewhat calm the distempered rage of the monarch.

Isabella had no great reason to entertain any very tender feelings towards her royal consort, since he had forced her to break with the man

she really loved, and accept himself. For, as Lord Paramount of Aquitaine, he could have rendered invalid any wedlock the heiress of the Anjouvains might have contracted without his consent. Had she, therefore, remained firm to her first love, he would have declared her fief forfeited for disobedience to himself, her immediate lord.

John, who had been deeply enamoured of her for some time after their marriage, had of late grown somewhat jealous and discontented, which had destroyed the little regard Isabella felt for her husband, and she was now about to behold him in a more detestable light as the murderer of his own nephew. Isabella, however, notwithstanding the sensation of disgust with which, in common with all mankind, she must have regarded John, concealed the feelings of her heart, and her presence and influence somewhat calmed his perturbed spirits.

She arrived and presented herself before him in all the splendour of her beauty, and, notwithstanding the depth of guilt into which he had plunged, took upon herself the task of recon-

ciling him to his immediate attendants, many of whom he had confined in the castle-dungeons, and she eventually succeeded in bringing him to something like a human condition. This was immediately perceptible to all around, for he quickly entered into society and gave himself up to the career of indolent voluptuousness in which it was his delight to indulge, and which so ill accorded with the dispositions of the stern and warlike nobles of his court.

In that era, men rose before the sun, dined at ten, and were frequently, with little intermission, in their saddles the whole day. The lascivious John, however, strove to bring in the fashion of lying in bed till mid-day, and was accordingly as unpopular amongst his barons for effeminacy and indolence as for the viler crimes he scrupled not to commit.

Whilst then, by the murder of his nephew, John was at this moment losing one-third of his domains at a blow, he was revelling in feasts and balls. He appeared, indeed, since the perpetration of that crime, to have become more reckless of men's opinion than ever. The major part of the barons engaged with him in

his foreign wars, struck with horror at his conduct, were only hindered at the moment from falling from him, by their allegiance, and the high sense of duty and loyalty towards him who wore the triple crowns of England, Aquitaine, and Normandy; and thus the mysterious chain of feudality held many who would otherwise have spurned his service.

Few even of the iron nobles of that age durst venture to express their feelings to a crowned King, however much they might find themselves aggrieved. There was one, however, who, although merely a Kentish knight, possessed, when fairly aroused, so fierce a spirit that no fear of consequences could restrain him from bearding the tiger even in his den. Like the noble *Cœur-de-lion*, his former companion in arms, he possessed a soul so chivalrous and dauntless that, rather than step aside from the paths of honour and rectitude, he would have consented to be torn to pieces without a murmur.

Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne, whom we have before seen employed upon a secret service by the King and then left to his fate, through

the instrumentality and timely succour of the brave Salisbury, had been enabled to escape; and now suddenly appearing at Court, the first time, learned the news of his daughter's disappearance. The King was at dinner when the Daundelyonne and his small party, gaunt with famine, and their whole equipage showing the desperate nature of their defence, made their appearance.

Five hundred knights and nobles, and a brilliant assemblage of ladies graced the hall in which the King feasted on this occasion. The stately Knight, who felt some touches of resentment against his royal master on account of the slight put upon him during his recent service, no sooner received intelligence of his daughter's flight, with a hint of its supposed cause, than he felt himself so foully dishonoured that, accoutred as he was and accompanied by two of his followers, he strode into the banquetting-hall and, without even unhelming, confronted the King as he sat amongst his guests.

The royal banquet was just over, and John, with the beautiful Isabella by his side, was in

the full tide of enjoyment; sparkling wine, martial strains, and brilliant converse for the moment, seducing him from fouler thoughts and more ugly conceptions. When suddenly raising his head, after a violent fit of laughter at a sally of the principal court-fool, he beheld the grim figure of Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne standing like a pillar of iron, and regarding him with a steady gaze through the bars of his helmet.

It was so much the custom for the employés of the monarch to have access to him at all hours, that those in immediate attendance had not questioned the Knight's approach, and John, with the career of laughter suddenly cut short by this apparition in war-worn coat and closed visor, regarded him for a brief space in some astonishment. The torn and disfigured surcoat of the stern Knight bearing no impress of his arms, and the crest being riven from his helm.

"Holy St. Withold!" exclaimed John, as he shrank under the stern gaze of the gigantic Daundelyonne, "what sturdy guest hath thus unbidden graced our feast? Speak, Sir War-

rior, who, in the foul fiend's name, gave thee permission thus to intrude upon our presence, and what seek ye here?"

"John of England," replied the Knight, "I am one of the few remaining followers of your heroic brother Richard, a poor knight of Kent, called Daundelyonne. For what I seek here, it is a beloved daughter whom I demand at your hands unscathed and unspotted as I left her, or failing in having her so delivered to me, I will offer her a bleeding sacrifice here before ye."

"Now, by our Lady's grace!" said John, who was always wanting in courage when fairly bearded; "now, by our Lady's grace, Sir Knight, you ask that of us, in which we cannot well accommodate you. We know nothing of the fair Bertha since she hath fled from our Court."

"How!" exclaimed the Knight, "what villain hath dared to force the daughter of a Daundelyonne to such a measure, Sir King?"

"We are not used to be thus questioned," said John, somewhat recovering himself. "Hence, sirrah: quit the presence whilst we

license your departure. For your daughter, and whom we graced by employment in our Court, learn to your mere confusion, that she hath fled scandalously from our royal care in company with a horseboy or page,—a varlet of your own household.”

“O King,” said the Daundelyonne, “foul-mouthed, slanderous, and dishonoured as thou art, whose service is disgrace, and whose reward for truth and loyalty is ignominy and shame, behold, I cast my gauntlet at thy feet, in token I will cram the lie thou hast just now uttered down the throat of any champion thou canst find base enough again to avouch it.”

Thus saying, the furious Daundelyonne, tearing his iron glove from his hand, cast it on the pavement before him; the assembled guests gazing in breathless astonishment, whilst the deepest silence reigned around.

“But no,” continued the fierce Knight, after a short pause, to see if any one replied to his challenge, “there is no such champion here. There is no Knight present, John of England, who would scruple to tell thee, that the honour

of a lady confided to thy charge should have been considered as a delicate flower, which the least breath of detraction or calumny would wither and destroy."

The rage of John had risen to so great a pitch during this address, that he was unable to speak; but throwing himself back in his seat, he had endured the Knight's wrath in a state of mute astonishment.

After somewhat recovering from the amazement the Knight's hardihood had produced however, he glanced around, and beckoned to his equerry to approach.

"Now, by Saint Radenegonde of Poitiers," he muttered, "but this insolence passes all we have ever heard of. Sir Walter de Mauluc," he continued, in somewhat bolder tones, "arrest that base scum of Kent on the instant."

Mauluc upon this, followed by several of the guards, rushed forward to execute the King's commands; but the Knight of Daundelyonne dealt him a blow in the teeth, which sent him reeling, and drawing his huge blade, opposed himself to the guards, who paused at his threatening aspect.

“Ha!” exclaimed John, drawing back, “have we treason so near us? Rise, gentlemen all, and secure this bold traitor.”

The hall was by this time in a state of dire confusion. Many of the nobles present, who had felt themselves aggrieved by the King’s conduct on former occasions, although they durst not espouse the fierce Knight’s cause, thus inconsiderately and violently urged, sat neuter; others again seemed inclined openly to avouch his right in the matter. The major part, however, drew their weapons and closed around the King, whilst the guard eventually overpowered and arrested the Knight of Daundelyonne.

“Hence with him,” cried the furious John, so soon as he saw him secured, “convey the Kentish maniac without the castle walls; there let him be shrived and hanged. Sir Walter de Mauluc,” continued the King, “thou bearest upon thy visage the impress of the lion’s claws: we give thee in recompense the office of seeing the beast deprived of his fangs.”

The Knight was quickly hurried from the hall, under a strong escort of Brabançon men-

at-arms; and being placed in a sort of tumbril, was conveyed without the castle-walls, where, whilst a gibbet was being erected, he was allowed the attendance of a priest from the neighbouring convent that he might confess his sins.

Gondibert the jester, who had been present in the hall during this scene, and had beheld with dismay the situation of the good Knight his friend, followed to the place of execution, and mingling amongst the crowd collected there, addressed himself to some of the Kentish archers. To these men he communicated the fact, that the person thus ignominiously about to be executed like some common felon, was their old leader the Knight of Daundelyonne. The intelligence speedily created a lively sensation amongst the bold yeomen of Thanet; so that, whilst many of those present strung their bows and prepared for a rescue, others made for the suburb, where the entire body of the archers of Kent were quartered, and the whole banding together, drew their bow-strings to their ears, and demanded that their old leader should either be given up to them, or they

would send a shower amongst the Brabançon men-at-arms.

Between the foreign mercenaries and the English men-at-arms there was always ill blood. Even in the stricken field it was sometimes hard to restrain the blunt Englishmen from showing their contempt of the foreigner. The Kentish archers bore in their appearance true signs of their Saxon descent. Gigantic in stature, with their fair sunny hair, round ruddy cheeks and high features, they usually came to the contest in their own dogged and peculiarly English style, sending such clouds of arrows amongst their foes, that nothing could well stand before them unless lapped in proof; and when they threw aside their bows and advanced into the *mêlée* with the heavy bills or short blades they carried at their sides, they mowed down their enemies with the same *sang froid* with which the reaper crops the ripened corn.

At the present moment, the English troops were not in the best mood. They were stung with the remarks they had heard on all sides upon the conduct of their King.

“ Young Arthur’s death was common in their mouths,
And when they spoke of him, they shook their heads,
And whispered one another in the ear ;
And he that spoke did gripe the hearer’s wrist,
Whilst he that heard made fearful action,
With wrinkled brows, with nods, with rolling eyes.”

The mercenaries, meantime, who were mostly equipped in chain-mail, seemed determined to execute their orders in spite of the English archers; and many of them being mounted, drew closely around the prisoner, and refused to deliver him up. They also despatched messengers to the King demanding a stronger body to enable them to carry his orders into execution; whilst a party of the grooms and attendants of the Brabançon Knights, whose quarters were just without the castle-walls also followed their comrades, and a tremendous uproar took place; in the midst of which the Knight of Daundelyonne was borne to the gibbet.

The archers had, however, so bestirred themselves, that they had collected nearly four thousand of their comrades, and prepared to strike in upon the mercenaries and carry off their leader. At this moment, John issued

from the gates of the castle, and accompanied by many of his guests mounted on horseback, attempted to restrain the fury of his English subjects, bidding them, on their allegiance, to remain quiet spectators of the execution about to take place.

Seeing that the King was only gaining time, whilst a large body of horse were issuing from the castle, the archers drew their arrows to the head, and shot at all indiscriminately who were opposed to them, so that the King finding himself in great danger, turned his steed and galloped off, followed by most of his party, whose gay banquetting costume was indeed ill adapted to withstand the cloth-yard shafts of the men of Kent.

In the midst of this scene of confusion, De Bossu, who had recovered from his wound, quietly stole in amongst the Brabançon men-at-arms, and attempted to put an end to the tumult by giving his aid to the executioner, and hanging the prisoner out of the way, at the same time that a strong reinforcement of the mercenaries galloped from the castle, and bore down upon the English archers. The

prisoner was, therefore, at this moment in considerable jeopardy, although he possessed so powerful a body of friends; for whilst the archers shot their arrows so thickly against their opponents that they forced them to give ground, they themselves were so cooped up in the thoroughfare where the fray was taking place, that their numbers were of little avail: and a few minutes would have sufficed to see the brave Daundelyonne swinging in the air, had it not been for the jester Gondibert and a strange man clad in a rusty suit of mail, who at this moment appeared upon the stage.

These two by thrusting themselves amongst the horsemen crowded around, and at the risk of having their brains dashed out by an iron mace, diving under the bellies of the horses, and, forcing themselves through the press, managed to reach the gibbet.

No sooner had they done so than, as if by a concerted signal, a swarthy-looking band of some twenty ill-accoutred ruffians, their arms and weapons smeared with grease, and themselves umbered with some sooty composition, suddenly attacked the guard on the castle

side. Whilst this was taking place, a division of the archers, throwing down their bows, advanced steadily from the opposite quarter, and with measured tread striking right and left amongst the horsemen, with their murderous bills cleared a lane towards the place of execution.

At this moment, Gondibert cut the thong which secured Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne's arms, and his companion of the rusty harness with a heavy blow struck De Bossu to the earth. The Knight instantly seizing the sword with which the Bravo was armed, assailed the surrounding Brabançons with such tremendous fury that he appeared resolved to do away the shame of the situation to which he had been reduced, upon their heads.

A few minutes more and the prisoner and his two rescuers had vanished, leaving no sign by which they were to be discovered, whilst the mercenaries were fain to retire slowly before their opponents, and take shelter within the court-yard of the castle.

The King was dreadfully enraged at this outbreak, which feelingly persuaded him of the

estimation in which he was held by his English subjects. He instantly gave orders that the city gates should be closed and strictly guarded, whilst he instituted a search through the town for the prisoner and his two friends. However, he could not discover the slightest trace of their whereabouts.

This affray indeed effectually broke up the state-ball which was to have taken place on the same night, and John shut himself up in his apartment in a paroxysm of rage; whilst the archers continuing banded together and under arms, refused to disperse until they received a royal promise of pardon for the outbreak,—an indemnity which the monarch was fain, after much persuasion, to grant them.

CHAPTER II.

LOSS OF THE PLANTAGENET DOMINIONS.

How wildly then walks my estate in France.

SHAKESPERE.

My honourable lords, health to you all!
Sad tidings bring I to you out of France,
Of loss, of slaughter, and discomfiture.
Guienne, Champagne, Rheims, Orleans,
Paris, Guysors, Poictiers, are all quite lost.

IBID.

THE outbreak and mutinous spirit displayed by the Kentish archers was but a type of the feeling which at the moment possessed the whole English power; for as it was well known to all men that John had murdered his nephew with his own hand, he had become an object of the blackest hatred of mankind.

The dead body of the murdered Prince, we have already said, was most singularly cast on shore. Notwithstanding the means used by the murderers to sink it in the stream, it

floated a ghastly evidence of their guilt, and being recognised, was buried at the Abbey of Bec.

In the dead of night and with the utmost secrecy was the body of the unfortunate Plantagenet committed to the cold tomb: no near relative, no sorrowing friend of the poor youth, being there to drop a tear upon his remains. The corpse was hurried into the grave by stranger monks, who in fear of the tyrant hastened the obsequies, and kept secret the place of sepulture*.

Notwithstanding, however, that John was detested by his subjects after this act, the proud, independent, and indomitable spirit of his English soldiers even yet stood him in stead; for, however much they despised him for his weakness and villany, they hated all foreigners even more, and being in a strange land in the midst of their foes: with the true English bull-dog spirit of their country, provided they had but employment in the field,

* The body of Arthur was cast on shore and buried at the abbey of Bec, secretly for fear of the tyrant, *propter metum tyranni*.—ANN. DE MARGAN, p. 13.

they were content to forget the faults of their employer amidst the din of war, the hurry and excitement of action, and the pleasures of new scenes and achievements.

The Bretons, meanwhile, who were enraged beyond measure at the loss of their beloved duke, swore a deadly revenge against John, and waging incessant war, carried their complaints before Philip of France, as their liege lord. They demanded justice for the violence committed by John upon Arthur, an *arrière* vassal of the French crown, and his own nephew, with the aggravation that he was, in addition, the vassal of the English king, as they urged, whom he was feudally bound to protect.

John, after his usual fashion, chose to disregard the tempest now raging around him, and still giving way to his career of indolent voluptuousness, was surrounded by mercenaries and bravos; whilst those of his barons who still adhered to him, vainly opposed themselves to the storm which shook his continental possessions. The Queen-mother, who had suddenly relented in her feelings towards Arthur,

had sent repeated messages to John after he left Mirabeau, praying him to suspend his cruelties towards the young Prince. Like many another great sinner, she had suddenly become scrupulous and conscientious ; and after a life spent in alternate war and pleasure, began to see the folly and vanity of her career. Accordingly, when the tidings reached her of the depth of guilt into which her son had plunged, she never from that moment was seen to smile.

John was at length fairly aroused from his lethargy, by hearing himself summoned by Philip of France, to stand his trial for felony and murder ; and on his refusing to appear, finding himself adjudged to forfeit to his superior lord all his seigniories and fiefs in France.

Philip, in fact, seized the moment which once neglected, seldom returns. He saw that now was the time to make an effort against the odious John, and by expelling the English power from France, to annex to the crown the many considerable fiefs which so long had been dismembered from it. The abhorrence in

which the English monarch was now regarded by many of his Norman subjects was as good as thousands on the side of France, many of the great vassals of the English king falling from him in his need: the Earls of Flanders and Blois, too, unluckily for John, were at this time engaged in the Holy War. The Count of Champagne was an infant under Philip's guardianship; and whilst, even amongst his own power, hostility and civil tumult reigned, every enterprise succeeded against the English. All the castles and fortresses beyond the Loire were quickly lost by the submission of the Count of Alençon to Philip, and for the moment, the French king broke up his camp, in order to give his troops a short repose after the fatigues of the campaign.

John, upon news of this, displayed one of those fits of alacrity for which he was celebrated. He suddenly shook off his apathy, and leaving his "lascivious wassails," collected together his English troops, and like lightning pounced upon Alençon; so that Philip, whose dispersed army could not be brought together in time to succour the place, suddenly beheld

his new ally, the Count, in danger of falling into the hands of his wrathful foe.

Whilst these events were passing, a curious and romantic incident took place, which from its circumstance of chivalry, would seem almost to have belonged to those days of romance, in which Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table flourished in Christendom.

It happened that just at this time, a splendid tournament was held at Moret, in the Gatinios.

To this "gentle passage of arms" nearly all the knightly and noble of France, together with the brave, the beautiful, and chivalrous from many other countries were assembled. It was a gorgeous scene, and such as few folks in this dull, calculating, and common-place age can well imagine. The immense concourse of knights and nobles who had collected on the occasion, made it one of the grandest assemblages that had been seen for years. The tournament was to have lasted three days; but when the lists were filled with spectators, the knights and their attendants upon the plain, the combatants glaring at each other through the bars of their helmets, and the very signal

for the outset to be sounded, a faint and long-drawn blast was suddenly heard from without, and as the actors in this gorgeous pageant stood "with eye and ear attentive bent," like the *dramatis personæ* of some splendid tableau, the King of France, surrounded by his knights and attendants, suddenly galloped into the arena.

Philip, whom it has been the custom of most historians and novelists to describe as the mirror of chivalry, instantly craved assistance of the brilliant assemblage of knights and nobles who "all furnished, all in arms," stood around him in the listed field; and after a tremendous objurgation of the detested John, whom he denounced as a base and hateful assassin, the stain of arms and the disgrace of knighthood, he pointed out to them the plains of Alençon, as the most honourable field in which to display their prowess and generosity.

The proposal was received by the assembled knights with shouts of applause. Slowly and majestically the noble host closed their files, and in a dense column "with swords unhacked, and helmets all unbruised," the glittering throng,

gorgeous in appointment, and under command of Philip, instantly marched to raise the siege of Alençon.

John quailed at the sound of their approach, and despite the entreaties of his valiant kinsman Faulconbridge, who had but newly joined him from England, and who almost alone remained to bear the brunt of the coming strife, he fled hastily from the wrath to come. Nay, so hurried was the English king's flight, that his tents, machines, and baggage, fell into the hands of Philip*.

* It has been the fashion amongst historians and writers of the period, to set off this crafty King in contrast to his "brother of England;" in short, to make him out a pattern of regal excellence. We think, however, despite the brilliant virtues it has been the practice of poets and novellists to accord to Philip Augustus, that, taking into consideration his living during the age of chivalry, he displayed but a mean, pitiful, and hard-hearted spirit, little better, except that murder stuck not openly to his hands, than that of his English rival. Take, for instance, the villany of his behaviour towards the two beautiful women who were his wives. Decked in all the pride of chivalry, he had sought and married Ingborde, the lovely daughter of Woldemar, King of Denmark. With fetes, with triumphs, and with revelling, himself "apparelled as became the brave," (for he had met his bride in full armour,) he had married her one day, and caused her to be crowned on the day succeeding. On the third day, however, the fickle monarch, without the shadow of excuse, had repudiated her, sent her at the

The English monarch now again relapsed into his usual slothful indulgence, and after the effort we have described, he remained in total inactivity at Rouen, passing his time with the fair Isabella in pastimes and amusements, whilst the gallant Bastard, the noble Pembroke, and others of his barons, not entirely disgusted with his conduct, fought his battles for him, and played a losing game as best they might.

“Pah!” he said, vauntingly, on being urged

age of seventeen an exile to Flanders, and even kept her a close prisoner in the abbey of Asain, near Lille, where, in an absolute state of disgraceful poverty, she was obliged to obtain her livelihood by the labour of her hands.

Succeeding in his object of obtaining a divorce, he next married Agnes de Meraine, a descendant of Charlemagne, a woman beautiful as she was gifted, graceful, and virtuous, and who was called “*La Fleur des Dames* ;” and to add to his nuptial joys he persecuted his former wife by sending her to a still more rigorous captivity in the dreary Chateau d’Etamps. After this, basely bending to the decree of Rome, he recalled the ill-used Ingborde, and suffered Agnes de Meraine to be disgraced and imprisoned in the Chateau de Poissy, where, in a few weeks, she died. To crown his unscrupulous conduct in his desire for a third wife, he even again confined the unhappy Ingborde in the Chateau d’Etamps.

Such was Philip Augustus, and whom it has been the fashion to cry up as a mirror of chivalry.

by several of his nobles to take the field and encounter the enemy in person,—“Pah! Let the French go on! When we *do* think fit to arouse ourselves, we will retake in a day what it costs them years to acquire.”

The Barons gazed upon each other in silent astonishment. They found their valour and conduct were wasted in the cause of a trifle. Gradually they drew off, and assembling their followers withdrew in silence and sorrow; and in a few short weeks many of the banners of the proudest in England floated over the keeps of their castles once more, and the Plantagenet dominions in France might be said from that moment to have been lost. Still, however, Chateau Guillard, which was situated partly on an island in the Seine, was gallantly defended by the constable of Chester, the determined Roger de Laice, who, at the head of a numerous garrison, baffled all the efforts of Philip to take it.

Under these circumstances, the French King resolved to reduce it by famine; and that he might cut off its communication with the neighbouring country, he threw a bridge across

the Seine, whilst he himself with his army blockaded it by land. Pembroke and Faulconbridge, at the head of four thousand infantry and three thousand cavalry, swooped upon Philip's camp in the night-time; and but from the failure of some flat-bottomed boats they had previously ordered to sail up the Seine, and fall at the same moment on the bridge, they would have succeeded in routing the French.

As it was, the violence of the wind, and the rapid current of the Seine, retarded the vessels, so that it was morning before they appeared; and Pembroke, although partially successful, was fain to retire with considerable loss.

CHAPTER III.

The sun of heaven, methought, was loth to set ;
But stay'd, and made the western welkin blush,
When the English measured backward their own ground,
In faint retire : O, bravely came we off,
When, with a volley of our needless shot,
After such bloody toil, we bid good night :
And wound our tatter'd colours slowly up,
Last in the field, and almost lords of it.

SHAKESPERE.

It was soon after the events we have just narrated that the sun went down fiery-red upon the stricken field near Falaise.

The day, as the great poet words it, had been "wondrous hot."

"Some airy devil hovered in the sky
And poured down mischief."

The English and Norman troops, although outnumbered and pressed hard by the French, had fought almost from sunrise with deter-

mined valour, bating no jot of ground to their foes. As the shadows of evening descended, the overwearied combatants began slowly to retire; and although here and there might have been seen whole masses of the splendid cavalry of the period engaged in desperate and deadly strife, still the forces on either side seemed tired of the contest. At a part of the field where the English infantry had been drawn up and made a desperate stand against the French chivalry, some half a dozen oaks had been secured by an enormous iron chain. The slaughter at this spot had been terrific; as from behind this iron barrier the Kentish bowmen had plied their craft, although repeatedly charged by immense masses of cavalry; and French and English lay together in absolute heaps, the slain having been indiscriminately piled upon each other by the archers so as to form a breastwork against these repeated attacks.

The gallant Faulconbridge, who had been unhorsed here, having in the early part of the day brought succour to the men of Kent, had performed prodigies of valour, fighting on

foot with his huge battle-axe like a common soldier. As the

“Light thicken’d and the crow
Made wing to the rocky wood—”

the din of war grew less and less, and the trumpets of the several leaders sounding in different parts of the field, gave token that the closing day had well nigh separated the willing combatants.

Leaning upon his huge weapon, and almost alone amidst the slain, the gallant Bastard stood with one hand grasping the huge chain which bound the trees under which he stood. The visor of his helmet was up, and his expressive features, pallid with the day’s toil, were somewhat raised as he watched the beauty of the sky after the sun’s decline.

There is something singularly delicious in this witching hour on a fine evening. The air appears to breathe more wooingly; the landscape, umbered down, looks more lovely than at any other part of the twenty-four hours; wood and fell, hill and dale, softened as with the finishing brush of an artist, invite the eye to stray again and again over its

beauties. The "things of day begin to droop and drowse;" the turmoil, the bustle, the business of the world to appear vain and ridiculous; some goddess of the groves and hills seems to claim the world for her silent reign; the elves and fairies to want their hour; and man's follies and his villanies to have no longer permission openly to affront the earth's surface, already cumbered with the remains of his strife and folly.

Whilst Faulconbridge stood lost in contemplation, and gazed upon the bright and luminous track which formed the back-ground of the picture, his thoughts reverted to the fabled ages of the early world, when nymph and satyr peopled such a scene.

To one like the gallant son of Cœur-de-lion, the hour and the landscape would have lost their charm, unless enjoyed under the present aspect. To him, all would have appeared tame and vapid had it not been attended with the circumstance, of war and chivalrous deed.

Faulconbridge stood almost alone during this reign of strife and misrule. He appeared to belong to no particular cast. A

soldier of fortune, he adhered to the party of his royal master with a truth and fidelity which were astonishing when we remember the fine and chivalrous mind of the man, his hatred of cruelty and oppression, his daring nature and yet gentle spirit when unaroused.

To him, the bivouac beneath the bushes' shelter was welcome as the feast in the castle-hall. He was *bon camarado* with all men; every soldier was esteemed his equal when on service, whether his veins bound the rich blood of kings and nobles, or that he was merely the crestless yeoman of the land.

During his career the light-hearted Faulconbridge went and came as he listed, since, unless on the opposing side, no drawbridge was raised, no portcullis lowered, when he rode and required rest or shelter for his party. Nobles welcomed and ladies smiled upon him at the feast, the hall, and tourney. He was the soul of honour—the delight of the brave and fair.

But now he had been engaged hand to hand with the horsemen of the enemy. His giant strength and valour had saved the post where

he fought from being overpowered, and the infantry sacrificed. The ground at his feet was strewed with the bodies of many he had struck down with his ponderous axe; and as he stood alone upon the spot, after the archers had drawn off, he forgot the scene of blood and the horror of the spectacle around in his admiration of the beauty of the world, as the coming night gradually softened down the surrounding scenery.

When the shadows of night, however, deepened upon the plain, the thoughts of Faulconbridge reverted to the events of the day, and the fortunes of him he served.

“Would that I could arouse in him,” he said, “but a small portion of the spirit of his royal line; would that he owned but a tithe of the disposition of his brother Richard, and all might yet go well. We would beat these Frenchmen hence. As it is, our leaders desert our cause, and we fight here but a losing game. Caen, Contans, Seez, Evereux, and Baïeux have fallen from us.”

“Aye,” uttered a voice close at his elbow, “and since that, Sir Guy of Thouars and his

Bretons have taken Mount St. Michael, Avranché, and a dozen fortresses besides ; you but lose your time, Sir Knight, in fighting for one who seems to have deserted himself."

The Bastard started, heaved up his battle-axe, and turned upon the speaker—a tall figure, clad in complete steel, and leading in his hand a youth.

"How now !" he said, "who dares breathe treason and disloyalty against him I serve ? Speak, sirrah, lest I smite thee for thy boldness."

"I speak but what all men know," returned the other, "and that of which you yourself are equally convinced. You but waste your efforts, I say, in this country, in the endeavour to serve one who, if he hath not deserted himself, has deserted his friends."

"How mean ye, Sir Knave ?" again angrily demanded Faulconbridge.

"That the King hath sailed, or is on the eve of sailing, for England," replied the other. "And that those he has left behind may have no doubts, as to his sincerity in abandoning them, he has first demolished Pont de l'Arche,

Moulineaux, and Montfort l'Amauri. His Norman subjects at least can have but small hopes of succour from him, and for his English troops, I advise them to cross the seas with all the speed they can."

"Ha!" exclaimed Faulconbridge, "can this be true?"

"Wherefore should you doubt it," replied the other, "knowing the King so well as you do?"

"And who and what art thou," inquired Faulconbridge, "who thus stumblest upon me in the gloom with such ill-omened tidings?"

"One formerly, and in happier days, a soldier like thyself," said the stranger, "but at present a broken and beggard man."

"And your name?" asked Faulconbridge.

"It is one you have doubtless often heard," said the stranger, "but were I to pronounce it perchance your arm would be stretched forth to apprehend me."

"You have said too much and too little for us to part without further circumstance," said Faulconbridge.

"I have sought thee, Plantagenet, with no

purpose so to part," returned the other. "Neither do I fear to speak a name which, out-cast and outlaw as I have become, is yet famous in this land. I am Guichard of Poicteau."

"That is indeed a well-known name," said Faulconbridge, regarding the outlaw with curiosity. "Though it is one more celebrated for bold than evil deeds. 'Twas thou who aided the Knight of Daundelyonne to escape from an ignominious death."

"It was," returned Guichard.

"And what then hath made thee divulge thy name to me?" inquired Faulconbridge with interest.

"Circumstances have made me resolve to quit my former way of life," replied the outlaw. "I would fain return to England, the land of my birth; and I have sought thee to crave thy aid and protection."

"Would the bold outlaw of Poicteau trust to any thing save his own right arm?" demanded Faulconbridge.

"'Tis not for myself I ask this favour," answered the outlaw, "'tis for this youth. Branded as I am, with a price set upon my

head, I would fain commend him to the care of some noble of truth and honour, till he reach the English shore."

"And where is he then destined?" inquired Faulconbridge, gazing with interest on the elegant form of the stripling.

"He will find friends upon the Kentish coast," replied Guichard; "where, indeed, as soon as I have taken leave of my former companions, it is my purpose to join him."

"Is he thy son?" inquired the Bastard.

"It is indeed my child," said Guichard, "whom, until lately, I had thought dead."

"And for his sake you are then quitting this land to seek a better trade? am I right?"

"'Tis even so," said Guichard.

"Enough, I accept the charge; and should I not myself return to England, I will give him in charge to the Earl of Salisbury, with strict injunctions as to his safety and welfare."

Far away in the distance lay the tents of the English power, glancing in long white rows, as the moon shed her silver light over the plain. The overwearied army slept after their

toils, but ere the dawn broke the rolling drum was heard in different quarters of the encampment as the several leaders struck their tents, and with their followers slowly retired. A rumour had reached them that John was collecting a fleet to sail for England.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HERMIT.

1.

His bed was strew'd with rushes,
Which grew upon the shore ;
And o'er his frame emaciate,
A sackcloth shirt he wore.
His eyes he oftentimes raised to heaven,
And thus exclaimed he :
 Adieu, adieu, thou faithless world,
 Thou wast not made for me !

2.

He sunk down on his rushes ;
His thread of life was broke ;
His eyes were closed in death's dim shade,
And never word he spoke.
His tongue in falt'ring accents moved,
'Twas life's last agony.
 Adieu, adieu, it seemed to say,
 Thou wast not made for me.

OLD SONG.

WHEN the Minstrel left his new ally, the jester Gondibert, he pushed on for some miles at a quick pace ; for he wisely considered, that

in the event of a recapture by the emissaries of John, his chance would be but a meagre one. The nearest tree and a short shrift might be his brief doom. With health, strength, and the courage of a lion, however, his spirits were high, and his step and bearing firm and buoyant as that of the stag upon the hill-side.

One purpose wholly possessed him, the recapture of the lady of his love; the only difficulty was to trace out the route her ravishers had taken. That discovered, and, to one of his ardent temperament, the rest seemed easy. Nevertheless, every step he took might lead him in a direction contrary to the destination he sought. As this conviction forced itself more fully upon him, he at length came to a stand, and, in a state of perplexity, endeavoured to commune with himself as to the best plan to pursue. His own personal safety was the very last thing he was likely to think of, but then he wisely considered that to lose his life or liberty would be the worst possible way of aiding her he professed to serve, and at length he came to the conclusion that travelling in his present character was rather a

dangerous experiment at the present moment. His costume of a troubadour, or minstrel, was perhaps as good a travelling garb as a man could well assume in these wild times, when every man's hand was against his fellow; since the professors of the joyous science were generally held sacred, and their company courted by high and low, gentle and simple. But as he might be recognized by the numerous parties continually repassing at this moment he resolved to doff it the first opportunity, and assume some other disguise.

Horse to ride and weapon to wear would have jumped most with his humour; but as he was now in the open world without a cross in his pocket, they were not at the present moment to be even thought of. Nay, even a good breakfast, under his peculiar circumstances, he began to think, although highly desirable, was somewhat difficult to achieve.

The road he had taken led towards Brittany, and as he had already been passed by more than one of the armed posts which at this distracted period were continually "tiring on," carrying messages, and bearing news to

the different parties in the King's service, he resolved to strike out of it, in the hope of reaching some hamlet where he might obtain some refreshment.

He accordingly turned down a sort of by-way or sheep-track, which led into the open country on his right.

The path he chose, small as it was, evidently gave token of leading to some place habited by man; and accordingly, as the open down he had hitherto traversed became studded with short-stemmed oaks, which, threw their broad arms across the greensward, he found himself in the vicinity of a small chapel or hermitage.

Nothing could have more jumped with his wishes than such a refuge; and after knocking for some time in the hope of gaining admittance without receiving any answer, he at length took the liberty of opening the door, and entering without leave.

The hermitage was one of those rudely-constructed refuges for the world-sick, the miserable, and the fanatical of the middle ages. It had been built partly of stone and partly

of boughs of trees, and was thatched with moss and dried fern ; a wretched shelter even for a dog, and through whose crevices the wind and rain found ready entrance.

Such as it was, however, it had been reared for purposes of penance and hard suffering, most probably by some repentant ruffian, the crimes of whose early life having savoured of reckless madness, his overheated brain had seized in age upon an opposite extreme of insanity, supposing the solitary life of a beast in the fields, with nails, hair, and beard uncut, added to seclusion and starvation, would best atone for his sins during life, and procure him canonization as a saint after death.

As the minstrel gazed around the dark interior of the squalid hermitage, he at first concluded it was untenanted, but on a closer survey, a startling object met his gaze.

On a filthy pallet, at its extremity, lay the dying remains of the proprietor of the holy edifice, the venerable hermit of this lonely wood. A more revolting spectacle the youth had never looked upon. The beard of the recluse, which would have been white but for

the dirt with which it was matted, completely covered his skeleton breast; and amidst his "fell of hair," his sharp features, and dim eyes, gave him the appearance of a sick owl. Starvation and sharp misery had reduced him to a living anatomy; a filthy and ragged garment of sackcloth barely covered his body; his nails, which had been permitted to grow for years, were of a frightful length, and altogether the minstrel was so much horrified at the lonely situation, and the object before him, that he felt at first inclined to fly from the place.

After a while, however, as he perceived the object before him was not yet dead, humanity prompted him to approach, in order to see if he could render assistance; and observing a basket which had been doubtless left by some peasant, for the use of the sick hermit, containing wine and other refreshments, he took the liberty of putting the flasket to the mouth of the prostrate sinner, and poured half the contents down his throat.

The hermit rallied with the grateful and unwonted taste of the cordial, and as con-

sciousness returned, caused by the generous liquor from which he had for many years abstained, the recollections, thoughts, and feelings of former days returned also.

He raised himself upon his pallet, and fixing his wondering eyes upon the minstrel with some such expression as that with which Caliban regards Trinculo, when he says,—

“Thou art a god, and bear'st celestial liquor.”

Even so the dying hermit regarded the youth who had poured the best part of a flagon of hippocras into his collapsed stomach.

After a long and searching look, during which the film seemed to dissolve from before the old man's dull eyes, and they assumed, in its place, an unnatural lustre, which was doubtless quite as much the result of genuine wine as insanity, he seemed as if he recollected something of the countenance before him, and had half expected the visit.

“Thou hast tarried long, my son,” he said, “and thy coming hath well nigh been too late. Thou hast recalled me from bright visions, and the flowery paths of a celestial world, of which

mine eyes had a distant glimpse, to the dull horrors of this miserable earth, and this noisome hovel."

"You mistake me, holy Father, for some older acquaintance," replied the youth; "but calm yourself, and again taste from the flasket which, he whom you take me for, has doubtless left for your support. Drink, holy Father, it will renovate your spirits, and put strength into your feeble heart."

"I mistake thee not, good youth," said the Hermit; thy favour is familiar to me, and I have long expected thy coming. The wish at this moment nearest to thy heart I can both divine and supply."

"Gramercy," said the Minstrel, looking around the bare and wretched hovel, "I something doubt that, holy Father, both as regards your capability of divining my wishes at this moment, and your power to supply them. My desires must indeed be humble, if they are to be satisfied by what I behold around me here."

"Thy thoughts are full of hope and ambition," said the Hermit, "but thou lackest the

slightest means of following them on to fortune. Thou art without purse or prospect; yet a bright fortune is before thee, hadst thou the means of pursuing it. Thou lackest harness, weapons, and steeds, to set thee up in this world of strife."

"Now, by our Lady's grace," returned the Minstrel, "how your holiness hath divined my thoughts, I know not; but thou hast guessed them aright."

"The walls of this dwelling are bare, my son," resumed the Hermit, evidently waxing feebler as he continued the conversation, "my worldly goods are few, yet still have they been sufficient for my wants for many years; a spade to dig roots for food whilst I live, and a grave for my body when dead. The last duty remains for thee to complete. Behold! the spade stands in yonder nook beside the crucifix. At midnight, dig deep into the centre of the floor of this hermitage; take thence that which thou covetest, and lay my body in its place. So shall both our wants be provided for."

The Minstrel was considerably surprised at

the words of the dying Hermit. He, however, promised faithfully to perform the last ceremony of his interment, which was all he supposed the holy man was anxious about, for as to finding any of the promised treasures buried in the hermitage, he considered that part of the story but a crochet of the old man's wandering brain. For many hours he continued to attend to the recluse; not forgetting, however, to partake of the viands which filled the basket upon the table; and about midnight the Hermit breathed his last.

The night was dark and stormy, and the situation of the youth by no means an agreeable one. He was alone in the house of death, and a degree of awe and melancholy he had never before experienced, seized upon his mind. As vivid flashes of lightning lit up the interior of the hermitage, and occasionally disclosed the ghastly object upon the couch, he sometimes fancied the skeleton form had risen from its lair, and was hovering close beside him.

Under the influence of these feelings he almost repented of the promise he had given to

the dying man to remain and perform his obsequies, and felt inclined more than once to rush from the dismal refuge into the forest without.

After awhile he somewhat subdued the awe which had crept over him, and rising from his seat approached the prostrate corpse in order to see if life was indeed quite extinct; and as he found no signs of animation, he immediately seized the spade and at once commenced his labours. The exhalations darting through the air gave him plenty of light for his task, and as the soil had evidently been frequently disturbed, he had nothing to do but to throw it out.

The work, however, took him some little time to perform, and having dug to a sufficient depth for the purposes of burial, he was about to desist in order to deposit the corpse. As he relinquished his spade, a sudden flash of lightning illumined the interior of the hermitage, and he beheld the ghastly form of the Hermit, with his owl-like visage and ragged beard, sitting upright upon the bed, and steadily regarding him. The eyes of this horrible apparition were wild and glaring, and

the finger of his right hand pointed into the newly-made grave.

The Minstrel at first recoiled with horror, and leaping from the trench he had dug, rushed to the further extremity of the hermitage, and sought wildly for the latch of the door.

A few moments' reflection, however, sufficed to convince him that the vision was but a creation of his own brain; more especially as a succeeding flash of lightning again showed him the corpse of the Hermit lying in the same position in which it was when the body had ceased to breathe.

Determined, nevertheless, to obey the signal his imagination had conjured up, he again seized the spade, and commenced digging with renewed vigour; and after shovelling out a few more spadefuls of the dark chalky soil, he came upon so hard a substance that he found it impossible to penetrate deeper. The impediment upon being struck emitted a dull, heavy, sound, and he quickly found upon examination that it was a good-sized oaken chest, strongly banded with iron, and so ponderous withal,

that it was not without considerable toil that he at length succeeded in raising it out of the grave, and landing it on the floor of the hermitage. The operation of digging, or rather shovelling into the earth from the pit at which he had been labouring, had employed him so long, that morning was breaking as he finished his task, and he opened the door of the hermitage that he might see more plainly what had been bequeathed to him by the deceased recluse.

His curiosity was so much excited that he quite forgot the state of loneliness he had before experienced, and to set to work with good will to get to the interior of the chest. That which first presented itself to the Minstrel appeared to be the impossibility of breaking into so strong a casket; but on examining the iron hoops which lapped over the chest, he found to his great joy they were unfastened.

To open the lid was but the work of a few moments, when, true to the words of the Hermit, that which he most wished for immediately saluted his eyesight,—a suit of chain mail, a knight's helmet and spurs, with

sword and shield to match, together with divers bags well filled with "shekels of the tested gold."

To draw the harness forth, and gaze upon it with feelings of affection and delight, was the minstrel's next employment. He then looked with curiosity upon the shield, in order to see if by its bearings he could discover the name or rank of the former owner.

The charges borne upon its surface were, however, those termed in heraldry "adumbrated charges," being figures merely represented in outline, with the colour of the field showing through; thereby signifying that the bearer having lost his patrimony, retained in fact but the show of his former state and dignity.

With feelings of unmixed delight, the youthful minstrel for some time continued to regard his prize, since he now saw himself in possession of that which his soul had long coveted, namely, a fitting equipage wherewith to win the renown for which he so long had panted. He resolved, therefore, to assume at once the arms which it appeared Heaven had guided

him to the spot for the very purpose of achieving.

The next, and most disagreeable part of his task, was the performance of his promise to the deceased hermit, but the possession of the bequest of the recluse had put him in such good spirits that he set about it with alacrity. Possessing himself of so much of the hoarded treasure as he conceived would be sufficient for the purchase of a steed, he placed the body of the hermit in the chest, along with the remainder, and consigning it to the earth, carefully filled up the grave, obliterating from the floor all signs of recent disturbance.

Scarcely had he finished his task, when the distant sound of horns and the bay of hounds struck upon his ear. To be discovered by any of the followers of the Court was hazardous; and hastily arraying his body in the suit of harness, he concealed the casque and weapons beneath the straw of the rude couch of the anchorite, and concealing his warlike appearance by throwing over the whole the long monkish gown of the deceased, he carefully drew the cowl over his features. This done,

he grasped the Palmer's staff, and boldly throwing open the door of the hermitage, looked forth into the forest.

The sight which immediately presented itself was an exciting one. The hunt was up, and the royal train in the field,—the King himself being present. Although it is hardly possible for the keenest sportsman of the present age to form any idea of the excessive fondness of the Anglo-Norman kings and nobles for the diversion of the chace, yet John was only by fits and starts given to such pastime. At one moment, wholly possessed by idleness, he would not, for months together, mount his horse to join in the hunt; whilst again, at others, as if he sought to drive away thought by violent exercise, he would weary out all his attendants, in the field. Many of the nobles, also, were so fond of hunting and hawking, that they spent most of their time, not engaged in war, in the hunting-field, wasting half their revenues by the expensive manner in which they pursued their favourite diversion*.

* John of Salisbury, who speaks of the chase at this

The sound of the horn, and the baying of hounds, were rather too much for the minstrel to bear without endeavouring to gain a peep at the exciting scene. Trusting, therefore, to his disguise, he stepped, as we have seen, to the door of the hermitage, and beheld the royal hunt sweep by.

John, who, mounted on his favourite hunter, was, to give him his due, a most regal-looking personage, being the handsomest as well as the best-dressed man of his day, with Isabella by his side, was foremost in the gallant train; and

period, mentions that the nobles of the land esteemed the sports of the field as amongst the most honourable employments, and most excellent of virtues, so that they spent the best part of their time in such diversions, thinking them, he observes, the supreme felicity of life. "Nay," says he, "they prepare for these sports with even more anxiety, expense, and bustle, than they do for war, and pursue wild beasts with greater fury than they do their enemies." By which pursuit, he goes on to affirm, they lose not alone their humanity, but become greater monsters than the animals they hunt. So general was the rage for rural sports during the middle ages, that ladies and clergy were alike addicted to it. "If one of these merciless hunters pass your habitation," again observes John of Salisbury, "produce all the refreshment you have, or can buy or borrow. lest you be involved in ruin as a churlish host, or be even accused of treason."

with his dark curled beard, handsome countenance, and becoming costume, he looked at least a good picture of an English king. The queen, too, who was followed by several of the ladies of the court, lovely as Diana and her nymphs, seemed a fitting companion for so regal-looking a figure; whilst the noble throng which filled up the cry, completed the splendour of the party. In appearance, the spectator might indeed have likened them to Theseus and Hypolita—

“ When, in a wood of Crete, they bayed the bear
With hounds of Sparta,
The skies, the thickets, every region near,
Seemed all one mutual cry.”

As the minstrel watched the departing forms of the hunters and their train, and just as he was about to re-enter the hermitage, he observed two figures approaching along a distant glade of the forest. Both were apparently completely armed; and as they neared the rude building, they turned their steeds from the forest path, and approaching, dismounted, and knocked for admittance. The youth, on observing the approach of the travellers, had

thought it prudent to retire and close the door ; but trusting to his disguise, he bade them enter.

“ The peace of heaven be upon you, holy father,” said the latter of the two strangers, “ we are sinful wanderers, who would fain find rest for a brief space, and if possible, refreshment.”

“ The hut of the hermit is but a poor house of entertainment for man or beast,” returned the Minstrel ; “ except water, which ripples from the rocks, and roots dug from the earth, nothing have I to set before you. Unless you can browse upon the herbage, with your steeds, good seigneurs, you will get, I fear, but a spare breakfast here.”

“ Gramercy, for your courtesy,” said the stranger ; “ ’twould have been better in that case to have wended onwards. Nevertheless, holy father, we will be bounden to you for at least the shelter of your roof for a brief space.”

So saying, the two knights, for such they seemed to be, slackened the girths of their steeds, that they might pick a salad whilst they rested ; and re-entering the hermit-

age, seated themselves upon the truckle-bed, like men who had ridden many miles since they first crossed their steel saddles.

At first the youth conceived that the visit of the stranger cavalier and his companion boded him no good. They were most probably, he thought, of the royal party ; and perhaps his safest plan would be to take an opportunity of quietly leaving the hermitage, and, whilst they were engaged in conversation, secure his escape by making free with one of their steeds, without the ceremony of leave-taking.

As he deliberated upon the propriety of this measure, the conversation of the pair, which he could hardly avoid overhearing, considerably interested him. They evidently had made the vicinity of the hermitage a trysting-place on some matter of import, and expected the coming of other parties. But that which chiefly caused the minstrel to lend his attention to all that passed, was the circumstance of their alluding, during their discourse, to the abduction of some lady of rank ; who, the minstrel immediately concluded, could be no other than her

he himself was so desirous of tracing. Whilst he listened with an attentive ear to the whispered discourse of his two guests, the distant sound of horns, and the echo of the wild halloo of the sportsmen proclaimed that the hunt was once more up, and in the vicinity of the hermitage.

The strangers immediately arose and looked forth. As they did so, the throng of hunters appeared in a distant glade of the forest; and the stag, now wearied and out-breathed, his former swift pace reduced to a reeling trot, and every step accompanied by a deep sob, suddenly emerging from the thick foliage, made straight for the hermitage, as if to gain its shelter.

On seeing the figures before the entrance, the gored beast made a sudden stop, then turned, and throwing up his antlered head, attempted to bound off and escape into the covert. The effort, however, was too much for his failing strength, and after a few paces had been gained, the gallant animal plunged heavily forward, and without another struggle breathed its last.

The next moment the foremost of the hunters (whose train had been considerably diminished by the length of the chase) came thundering up. One man, and it was the Plantagenet himself, was in advance of the rest. He galloped to the spot on which the stag had fallen, and dismounting from his steed, gazed upon it with curiosity. The animal was indeed worthy of his notice, for it was of an immense size.

“Ha! my masters all,” he said, as he placed his foot upon the fat carcase, whilst the remainder of the train coming up, stood around with their caps doffed, “Ha! my master’s all; but this is a rare beast, and well worthy of the toil we have this day endured in his chase. What say ye, my Lord Abbot?” he continued, to the hunter next him. “By my fay, ’tis a religious beast too, and hath sought to die here in the sanctity of this hermit’s cell.”

The churchman bit his lip, for he well knew that John seldom spared a jest against the clergy. “Your Highness is pleased to be jocular,” he said; “nevertheless, methinks the remark savours strongly of impiety.”

“Nay,” said the King, laughing, “we meant no offence against holy mother Church, Sir Priest*. And yet look ye,” he continued, as he struck the enormous carcase of the stag with his foot, “how fat and well fed is this animal! Nay, there is scarce a monk in thy abbey in better case, and yet I dare be sworn he never heard a single mass.”

The churchman turned away amidst the laughter this sally had occasioned; and whilst John busied himself in a closer examination of the fallen deer, he regarded him with a look of deadly hate.

Followed by an attendant monk, the abbot stepped into the hermitage.

“I marvel the wrath of Heaven hath not manifested itself against yonder scoffer,” he said to his companion.

“If the service of so weak a minister might be accepted,” said the attendant monk, “I would dedicate myself to the destruction of the tyrant.”

* John’s sallies, of so-called wit against the corpulency of the monks, more than all his enormous crimes, made him pass with them for an atheist.

“Ha!” cried the churchman, “’twere indeed a worthy piece of duty, good Eustatius. We will confer further at a more fitting opportunity.”

Meanwhile, the King gave orders for a repast to be prepared beneath the sheltering boughs of the surrounding trees, whilst the bugles of the huntsmen rang out to recall the stragglers, and inform the Queen of their whereabouts. He then entered the hut, and, together with Mauluc, held conference with the strangers, who, it soon appeared, had appointed to meet the monarch at this spot. What was the exact purport of their meeting the minstrel failed of discovering; but, unsuspected under his assumed character, he learned enough to give him a shrewd suspicion that their appointment with the King had some connexion with the abduction of Bertha Daundelyonne. They spoke of some deep-laid scheme to carry off a lady of rank. Sir Raoul de Brabant’s name more than once transpired, and Brittany seemed to be the theatre of their exploits. Under these cir-

cumstances, the minstrel resolved to keep a wary eye upon the pair, and follow them as soon as they should part company with the monarch.

CHAPTER V.

AN ABDUCTION.

We'll show thee so, as she was a maid,
And how she was beguiled.

SHAKESPERE.

THE rapidity with which the small party travelled with Bertha Daundelyonne, gave that lady little time for thought or observation.

In those days, roads were rough and ways were foul. The country was for the most part swamp, wold, waste, or forest; and a night excursion required all the care and attention of the rider towards the steed he rode, lest he failed in keeping his footing on the uneven track. The night, too, had become somewhat overcast after the party started, and, albeit the lady had no cause to complain of any want of attention on the part of the youth who rode at her bridle-rein, and assisted her in the guidance of her horse, at the same time that he appeared to be the commander of the

party—she felt somewhat surprised, that although they had been galloping helter skelter for some hours, he had addressed no word of conversation to her, merely replying to any observation she might make, by a simple monosyllabic reply.

She however concluded, that fear of the vengeance of the dreaded John, in case they should be pursued and overtaken, kept her devoted servant so wholly occupied in mind, that until they were somewhat beyond the reach of pursuit, he was too absorbed and occupied to be able to converse even with her.

It was so much the custom for ladies of condition at this period to be for hours at a time on horseback, both when engaged in travel, and the diversions of the field, that Bertha for some time found the rapid rate at which they rode no fatigue to her. As morning, however, began to dawn upon them whilst still at their headlong speed, she requested of her guide that the quick pace at which they travelled might be somewhat moderated, as she began to feel fatigued.

“Methinks, Sir Minstrel,” she said, “that at the pace we have ridden, we must be now pretty secure from pursuit, and Chateau Trompillion, where my father is quartered, cannot be many miles distant.”

Her attendant turned a deaf ear to the hint, and pointing to the dark boundary of a thick forest which lay about a mile ahead, whose dusky outline was now becoming visible in the mists of the rising dawn, he signified that until the covert of the wood was gained they must hold onwards with all the speed they could make.

“Our party is small, Lady,” he remarked, and the King will be likely to send a strong body of his fleetest horse after us; in which case, should we be overtaken, we must expect no sort of favour, for well I know his vengeful nature. Trust me, Lady, we shall be ridden down, and slaughtered without remorse or mercy.”

So far as himself and his followers were concerned, the speaker had but urged the truth, inasmuch as his troop being entirely composed of the troops of the Knight Sir Raoul, would stand a good chance of being

stopped or molested by any larger party than themselves; for the Brabançons were at the period little better than commissioned banditti, ever ready to engage under the banner that paid them best, infamous at all times for rapine, and whose hands were against all men. Almost ere the forest was gained, and as the increasing light made objects more distinguishable, rendering the individuals of the troop, in the midst of which the lady rode, more plainly to be observed, a horrid suspicion entered her mind that all was not quite right. The next minute, however, the party dashed into the jaws of the thick wood, which, dark as a wolf's mouth, at length caused them to moderate their pace.

The Lady now addressed some words of inquiry to her companion, but, under pretence of looking to the proper route of his party, he evaded her question and reined back so as to allow her to precede him his steed's length. It was now again dark as midnight, and except the hoof-tread of their steeds, and the ringing sound of arms and steel harness, occasionally varied by the cry of some startled

bird of prey amongst the massive foliage, no sound greeted Bertha's ear.

Once or twice, after turning and endeavouring to catch sight of her guide, she tried to check her steed, so as again to make inquiry. But as the iron figures on either hand immediately closed up and urged her on, she found, to her dismay, that her fears were well nigh verified, and that she was indeed a prisoner. Her terror now became so great that she could scarcely sit her horse; but still comforting herself with the persuasion that her suspicion might yet prove groundless, she endeavoured to banish her alarm.

After about an hour's riding in the gloom, as the forest became less thick, the leader of the party called a halt, and appeared to be searching for some mark of guidance he expected to meet with at this part, and at length came to a sort of sunken cross of stone, which stood like a landmark beside the track they were pursuing. Here they turned down a broad and open vista, and in a short time, as the wood became still more open, and the light of heaven made objects more apparent

in the mists of early dawn, they suddenly arrived before a low, irregular, moated building, standing in the midst of a beautiful space, green as the emerald. The party rode round the dark moat until they came to the draw-bridge at the entrance, when the leader putting his bugle to his lips blew a loud blast.

No stir was for some time apparent within the stronghold. The thick low towers which flanked the gate-house had no windows, but to those who watched the small narrow crenelles and arrow-slits grim features and flashing eyes were to be seen glaring upon them from within. At length, after a somewhat tedious scrutiny, during which the party kept at a respectful distance from the gate-house, a voice, which issued from a round opening in the basement floor of one of the towers, demanded their business. The answer was given by the leader in a language the Lady Bertha did not understand, after which the leader was desired to come forward. As he did so, he took his pennon from the hands of the man who carried it, and spurring towards the gate-house shook it out so as to display upon its dark surface

the dragon volant; the countersign was then demanded of them, when a small packet was delivered through the opening.

The towers were immediately garrisoned by men-at-arms, who sprang up from behind the turrets. The drawbridge was lowered, the portcullis raised, and the massive door thrown open; upon which the party, receiving the word "forwards," trotted into a small paved court, and the entrance was again immediately fast closed against the world. The lady now found herself in a square paved court-yard, which seemed half filled with the troops who garrisoned the place, and who had been hastily mustered on the approach of her party. A glance around showed her the insecurity of the times, since one side of the square was a blackened shell, a significant intimation that recent siege, fire, and slaughter had placed its present occupiers in possession of the place. As she gazed in terror and astonishment, the leader of the party dismounted, and with much courtesy assisted her from her horse. Somewhat re-assured by the attention of her conductor, she inquired if the fortress

they had arrived at was that in which she had been led to expect she was to meet the Knight, her father.

“This, Lady,” said her guide evasively, “is the place to which I am commissioned to escort you. Permit me to wait on you into the hall of the building.” So saying, her conductor took her hand and led her into the small arched hall of the stronghold.

We have said that the leader of the escort, under the disguise of his closed helm and steel harness, in height and figure was not unlike the youthful minstrel; but when, on leading the lady to the blazing fire which glowed upon the hearth, he raised his visor, she discovered—that which she dreaded was the case—that her escort was a perfect stranger to her. The dreadful truth instantly became apparent; she had been betrayed and entrapped. By the dragon volant, which was emblazoned upon the surcoats of several of the men-at-arms, who closed around to gaze upon her, she knew the Brabançon troopers, the mercenaries employed by John. The gloomy apartment, the grim and savage figures amongst whom she found

herself alone, and a sense of the incomprehensible conduct of the minstrel, who appeared to have betrayed her, struck a chill upon her heart, and gazing wildly at the leader of the escort and his companions, she sank down in a swoon upon the floor.

The young esquire, who was a degree better than the troops amongst whom he served, was moved with the situation of his charge. He saw in an instant that one so exquisitely beautiful ought not to be exposed in her distress to the rude gaze of the hirelings and coarse ruffians around: as she reclined in his arms she looked some angel who had descended into that dark hall for a season. Addressing himself, therefore, to one of the men-at-arms, who stood gazing like a savage suddenly beholding beauty for the first time, he bade him sound to horse.

“Sound out, Bernak, and get the men under arms,” he said; “I have orders for you, my masters all,” he continued, “from our chief, and you must get to horse without delay.”

The men slowly and reluctantly withdrew their gaze, and with clanking strides left the

apartment, all save one, who appeared a sort of officer of the garrison, and to him the esquire applied for assistance in order to restore his fair charge to consciousness. An elderly female was quickly summoned, and Bertha, being conveyed to a sleeping apartment of the building, was consigned to her care.

“The damsel of Brittany,” said the soldier, inquiringly, as with the esquire, he re-entered the hall, “by heaven, she is as lovely as report speaks her! but you are rather sooner than we expected. The bird hath been limed easily, methinks. I hardly thought that John would have got her so quickly into his power.”

“You are mistaken, good Bernak,” returned the Esquire. “This lady is not the damsel of Brittany. That business hath not yet been effected; but our leader is even now engaged in it. Meanwhile, this is a little *affaire de cœur* of our own. The good knight is resolved to wive, and yonder lady hath lands in England, as broad as her beauty is exceeding.”

“Ah!” said the other, “and is it so? Then I presume he gets the royal consent in this

matter as fee for his service in carrying off the royal Breton?"

"I know not that, good Bernak," said the Esquire, "but he means, at all events, to thrive in his suit, and gain the lady's consent first. Accordingly, he hath commenced his wooing like a soldier; and we have carried her off, as you perceive."

"And when are we to expect the good Knight, with his other prisoner?" asked Bernak. "We have now rendezvoused here a whole month, lying close as a nest of hornets in a frost. By the same token, we are somewhat tired of the dulness of such seclusion, whilst the whole land rings with drum and trumpet. Methought, you dropped some hint of a move hence, just now?"

"I did so," returned the Esquire, "we shall all have opportunity of enjoying the fresh air in a short space. John requires the services of his friends just now; and ere to-morrow dawn, you march for Falaise."

"Good!" said Bernak; "and you, I suppose, remain in charge here. Ah! Sir Knave; said I well? By the mass, an' I had thy simper and

years, and well-turned limbs, I should like no better duty. Such a prize as yonder beauty, methinks, would go well nigh to make me commit a breach of trust. Do you remain perdue, here, good Aumori, or carry the fair Linda-brides towards our Brabançon home?"

"See you there, now!" said the Esquire. "what a clever fellow you think me. Suffice it, our roads run in different directions; and there goes the trumpet that summons thee to horse. Adieu!"

When Bertha Daundelyonne recovered from her swoon, she found herself alone with the frightful specimen of the fair sex to whose charge she had been consigned; and as consciousness of her situation flashed upon her mind, she threw herself upon her knees before the ill-favoured hag, and in accents of terror endeavoured to elicit from her the name of the parties into whose power she had fallen. It was all in vain. The old dame, whose envious disposition seemed as crooked as her shape, evidently enjoyed the distress of a creature as exquisitely beautiful as she herself was hideous. Of those persons consigned to her charge, she

said, in answer to the lady's hurried inquiries, she herself forbore all question, and she was equally chary of indulging any curiosity in her guests. Time, she continued, generally explained all things ; and meanwhile, although the noble lady would have every indulgence consistent with the orders received, the worthy dame gave her to understand that she would find it useless to attempt leaving the apartment she then tenanted. With this, the old lady withdrew, and left her charge to herself.

When the massive door closed behind the hag, a sickening sensation came over the fair Bertha as she heard the harsh grating of the ponderous lock which made her a prisoner in the unknown chamber. On somewhat recovering herself, she took the lamp from the oaken table, and gazed around.

The apartment was ample, and like most other rooms of that period, it lacked furniture, and had a cold inhospitable aspect, its stone walls being unhung and its flooring uncovered ; —anything like modern comfort being then unknown, even to the nobles and grandees of the land, in their dwellings.

A heavy, hearse-like bed, however, stood in one corner, and on the hearth glowed a comfortable wood fire; whilst a cumbrous oaken table, whose legs were as thick as a man's body, stood before its blaze, and a couple of heavy chairs occupied positions on either side the fire-place.

These were times in which the most diabolical and unscrupulous deeds were perpetrated upon defenceless females; many ladies of noble birth having been forcibly and secretly abducted from their friends, and never again heard of. And well did the lady at this moment remember such tales. Yet still, unless the English king, whose well-known propensity to offer insult to the wives and daughters of his nobles, had caused her to be thus carried off, she was utterly at a loss to fix on any person she knew as likely to have made her a prisoner in this infamous manner. The recognition of the banner of one of the mercenary chieftains in the employ of John, but whose name at the present moment she could not recollect, made her suspect the English monarch, and as of all men she most dreaded him, she was proportionally alarmed.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CAPTIVE.

About a stone-cast from the wall,
A sluice with blackened waters slept,
And o'er it, many round and small,
The clustered marsh mosses crept ;
Hard by, a poplar shook alway,
All silver-green with gnarled bark ;
For leagues no other tree did dark
The level waste, the rounded grey.

She only said "My life is dreary.
He cometh not," she said.
She said, "I am a weary, a weary,
I would that I were dead."

TENNYSON.

HOWEVER much the captive Bertha dreaded the development of the mystery of her abduction, fearing as she did, that each day might realize her worst surmises, and perhaps bring a visit from the hateful monarch, she still felt that something like certainty as to who was her captor, would be a relief. It seemed, however, that she was to be doomed to a hopeless

captivity without ever being informed of the reasons of such persecution, or the person by whom she was condemned to it.

Day after day passed, and her solitude was not relieved by the sight of any living being except the miserable-looking attendant to whom she had been first consigned.

The old dame seemed to have been especially ordered to anticipate her wishes in regard to the good things of this life, and took great care that as to the articles of food she should have no cause of complaint. The hag, too, signified, that her directions now extended to the indulgence of so much liberty as an hour's stroll in the thick-walled garden of the chateau twice a day amounted to, on which occasion the old dame hinted that she herself would always be within hail.

Even this was a great boon to the fair maid of Kent, and served to break the hitherto dreadful monotony of her solitary confinement. It also gave her hopes of some time or other effecting her escape; and she examined, with a careful eye, every part of the pleasure over and over again, as she daily profited by

the liberty thus allowed. Her hopes, however, seemed destined to be dashed. The only outward opening in the high and massive wall, which on every side surrounded the garden, was protected by a thick iron-studded door, strong enough for a jail; and when on one occasion her jailer observed the wistful eye with which she examined it, she took one of the keys from her girdle, and turning the ponderous lock, threw it open. Bertha then saw that the dark waters of the moat flowed outside, the only means of crossing which was by a small draw-bridge, locked and secured on the garden side. Any escape through the interior of the fortress from this garden was, she likewise found, equally hopeless; as, except by the small and narrow postern by which she had entered it, there was but one other entrance, and that apparently had been closed for years.

The garden, too, exhibited tokens of having been utterly neglected for a great length of time. Its damp walks were overgrown with weeds and moss. The unpruned boughs of the trees grew in such wild luxuriance, that it

was a task of some difficulty for their explorer to pick her way along them. Weeds and long grass completely overwhelmed the few flowers here and there struggling amidst them, whilst

“The rusted nails fell from the knots
That held the peach to the garden wall.”

There was, however, a melancholy in all this neglect and ruin, which better suited with the fair captive's frame of mind than the most trim and well-kept parterre could have done. She had full leisure in its secluded and shadowy paths to contemplate the unstable nature of all worldly pomp and grandeur—to reflect upon the acts of the envious court in which she had once so much panted to display her beauty, and the real value of that beauty she had held so inestimable, and which had brought her into her present strait.

Here, too, she occupied herself in nourishing the secret passion she entertained for the handsome stripling who had so long attended her, and whom, as we have seen, she confounded with her new acquaintance the young troubadour.

Hour after hour, as the evening wind sighed amongst the thick and clustered trees in this deserted garden, she loved to ponder over the last few months of her existence, especially dwelling upon that part of it which had been spent in the company of the fascinating page. And then again came doubts and fears as to his truth and loyalty to her. There was something terribly humiliating in the idea that he whom she had condescended to regard with favour, and to whom she had almost confessed a requital of his passion, should have betrayed the trust confided to him. Yet that such was the case she could hardly doubt, when she remembered the incomprehensible and singular behaviour of the wayward page from her first becoming acquainted with him ; his almost studied indifference to the many tokens of favour with which she had honoured him, and then his sudden profession of attachment on the evening of her flight,—professions which would now seem to have been merely assumed in order that she might place herself in the power of the party he had sent almost immediately after quitting her.

Yet still, with all her doubts and fears, she could hardly believe the boy so base as to have lost all sense of proper feeling; and such was the impression her last interview with the minstrel had left upon her imagination, that she found it impossible to tear his image from her too impressible fancy. Nay, as is oft-times the case with those whom the blind god has winged, and who have little to employ the mind, her whole soul was wrapped in contemplation of the one beloved, and she spent entire days in listening for the slightest stir amongst the garrison of the fortress in which she was confined, in hopes each hoof-tread without and each footstep within might prove that of her favourite.

Providence, however, attunes the mind to the circumstances in which we are placed. Bertha, the once-admired of the glittering throng,—she whose ideas had soared eagle-like above the clouds—now in this cloistered seclusion, like one dead to the world, found all her flights of fancy cribbed and confined to the dull routine of a hopeless imprisonment; and her affections were even glad to fasten

themselves upon the poor flowerets of an unweeded garden. She even found employment in training the fruit-trees, which from neglect bent from the walls, and weeding away the rank herbs which encroached over the path. Thus day after day elapsed, till weeks accumulated into months, and yet no change came to disturb the dreadful monotony of her solitary imprisonment:—

“ Upon the middle of the night,
Waking, she heard the night fowl crow ;
The cock sang out an hour ere light :
From the dark fen the oxen’s low
Came to her, without hope of change ;
In sleep she seemed to walk forlorn,
Till cold winds woke the grey-eyed morn
About the lonely moated grange.”

It had, however, been no part of the plan of the gallant Brabançon to subject the lady he had chosen for his future spouse to so long and rigorous an imprisonment ;—but we must explain to our readers, in order to exonerate him from the charge of wilfully neglecting so fair and excellent a lady after having succeeded in getting her into his clutches, that circumstances had totally put it out of his

power to visit her. It was lucky for the fair captive that, after he had succeeded in the commission entrusted to him, the suspicious jealousy of the King demanded the constant attendance of the Brabançon at court. It had been the previous intent of the shrewd Knight, who we have already seen was an unscrupulous and crafty knave, to take advantage of the defenceless condition of Bertha, and after an enforced marriage, claim the royal consent and pardon in return for the service he hoped to render. What that service was, has already been intimated to the reader; and the murder of the Duke of Brittany having paved the way for its completion, the Brabançon, who from circumstances was the most likely man to perform it, eventually succeeded in his attempt, and placed Elinor, the sister of the murdered duke—who by his death became the heiress of the duchy of Brittany—in her unnatural uncle's power, whence, we need scarce inform our readers, she never again escaped; being, conformably to the barbarity of an age which bore no rival near the throne, closely immured in the monastery at Bristol for forty years.

This piece of villany had, however, taken the Knight more time and trouble than he had bargained for; and although his emissaries had been for some time at work, and parties of his rapacious troops had been lying perdué in various localities, in the hope of capturing the fair Breton, he was once or twice baffled before he could get her into his power. He had even found it necessary to draw off the party who garrisoned the small fortress he had considered the most eligible spot for his purpose, until he could find leisure to commence a thriving suit, and woo her as he conceived a soldier should woo his bride.

Under these circumstances, and whilst his jealousy would allow of no one, not even the esquire he had first sent as her escort, having access to the lady of his choice, she languished out her dull hours, with only a small guard of some twenty men-at-arms to garrison the stronghold in which she was confined.

The King meanwhile, whose temper and disposition were not improving under the various reverses he daily experienced, got a hint of the matter from Mauluc, whose envious

jealousy had surmised that his sometime companion knew of the whereabouts of the Kentish beauty. Accordingly, the mercenary leader found himself in a sort of safe custody about the Court; inasmuch as he was desired to remain in close attendance, and all his motions were as strictly watched as if he had been an enemy, in place of a well-paid ally.

In fact, the gallant Brabançon found himself altogether in a most unenviable situation after he had rendered John the last piece of service we have named, and placed the unhappy and beautiful heiress of Brittany a hopeless captive in his hands. The King, who had offered him the sum of money agreed on as the fee for this achievement, had been surprised at the mercenary's refusal of all reward. It was this unwonted self-denial of Sir Raoul which had first raised the suspicions of the dark-browed Mauluc, and led him to hint to the monarch that ere long, at some convenient opportunity, the richer reward the Brabançon meant to claim would be broached.

Under these circumstances, the crafty John overwhelmed the Knight with his professions

of advancement and gratitude for service already rendered, a sure sign that, like the cat when it is most playful with its victim, he meant to destroy the Knight as soon as he was tired of amusing himself at his expense.

In addition to the disgust he felt at such a man as the mercenary leader presuming to interfere with the royal amusements, there was another matter which placed the Brabançon within danger of the King's ire. The monarch was absolutely jealous of him, and practised upon by the cunning arts of Mauluc, actually suspected the lovely Isabella of entertaining an affection for the burly Knight.

In explanation of this somewhat extraordinary fancy upon the part of the royal husband, which led to events of an almost incredible nature, we must remind our readers that nothing could well be considered extraordinary with such a man as John—a fortieth part of whose eccentric acts and dreadful deeds, committed in our own days by a common man, would have consigned him to the whip, a dark room, and a strait-waistcoat for life.

There were, in truth, some slight grounds upon which the crafty Mauluc, Iago-like, sought to fasten the suspicions of the King, and afterwards leave them to work "like the mine of sulphur," in his excited brain.

The Brabançon, who half suspected the overstrained kindness of the monarch, whilst he neither dared to withdraw himself for the purpose of visiting his captive, nor even to send a message to her by any of his followers, so certain was he that his every motion was watched, had thought it best to try and interest the Queen as much as possible in his favour. Throwing himself, therefore, upon her feeling, he had sounded a tale in her ear of certain love passages and a devoted attachment he feigned to exist between Bertha and himself, at the same time taking upon himself the merit of removing the Kentish beauty from the Court and influence of John, who he scrupled not to own had affronted the lady by his attention. Isabella, who had turned a ready ear to the story and application of the Knight, promised him that at a fitting

opportunity she would sound the King upon the matter, and endeavour to wring from him his consent to the nuptials. This was a great point gained with the gallant, as nothing was more foreign from his wishes than to be hampered with the lady without the lands she owned; and as he well knew that unless the royal consent could be obtained, he should stand but a bad chance of them, he resolved that the promised intercession of the Queen was as good as an assurance of success.

Thus then stood matters during the entire period of time whilst John's Norman possessions "walked wildly," as we have described, and until he himself, after secretly collecting his fleet, was making preparation basely to sneak over to England with some part of his power, leaving the rest to follow as they best could.

¶ Meantime, Mauluc, who had been rewarded by John for the secret service he had performed, and had received the assassin's fee in the person and possession of the heiress of Mulgref, was now become a man of increasing importance

and influence with the King, who, indeed, seldom undertook anything without first consulting him.

Between the Brabançon and the Poiteven Knight, however, there was but a hollow sort of friendship. In fact, while there was every show of good feeling outwardly, each had resolved the other's ruin at a fitting opportunity. This the Monarch could not fail of observing, and it gave him actually a new pleasure to watch the growing hatred of the pair and their attempts at a sort of overstrained ceremony towards each other; whilst, at the same time, such is the incomprehensible blindness of the over cunning, he could not see through the deep villany of the one, as he practised upon his own jealousy at the expense of the other.

Whilst concealed in the apartments of the Queen, the Poiteven had overheard the suit of the Brabançon in regard to Bertha, and her Majesty's promise to befriend him, and, ere the interview was over, he sought out and conducted the Monarch by a winding-stair to the turret which adjoined the royal apartment,

where he might observe, although he could not hear the conference.

From this vantage ground the Monarch beheld the vehemence with which the Brabançon pleaded his love for the fair Bertha, and, on the Queen's reiterated assurance that their true affection should meet its reward, he saw the apparent lover throw himself at her feet and tender his thanks with his lips upon the royal hand. This was enough for John: he was only hindered from ordering the mercenary to be cut to pieces before him, by the desire of a more refined and most diabolical evenge, which at the same time would strike terror into the heart of the Queen.

CHAPTER VII.

A ROYAL EXCURSION.

For while this fool
Plies Desdemona to repair his fortunes,
And she for him pleads strongly to the Moor,
I'll pour this pestilence into his ear:
And, by how much she strives to do him good,
She shall undo her credit with the Moor.
So shall I turn his virtue into pitch,
And out of his own goodness make the net
That shall enmesh them all.

SHAKESPERE.

It is somewhat extraordinary, but not the less true, that bad as was the temper and disposition of John before his marriage with the fair Isabella, he was observed to grow worse after he had been a short time wedded to her. There is no reason to suppose that the Queen ever gave him any real cause to suspect her fidelity, but it is certain that about the period of his reign at which we have now arrived, he was tormented by the green-eyed monster to

so great a degree that he seemed at times little better than a raving maniac. His awakened suspicions, too, were the more maddening that he felt he never could have rest till he had fully proved their truth. To his evil mind, it seemed, that certainty of his wife's guilt would be more gratifying than even proof of her innocence. Dull, morose, and savage, doubting her he loved, he was racked and tormented by the vilest fiend that ever preyed upon the heart of man. And although outwardly he behaved with a marvellous degree of forbearance towards his Queen, he watched with the most malignant jealousy every word she uttered, and her conduct and demeanour towards all who approached her.

The Brabançon Knight was not exactly the sort of man he would have suspected of fixing a lady's eye, but, as he had but a mean opinion of the sex in general, he concluded there must be some qualities about the burly mercenary which, although he himself could not discover them, had captivated the Queen's fancy. Like the gentle Desdemona too, Isabella dispelled any doubts her husband might have enter-

tained as to the truth of her accuser by her performance of the promise she had given to the Brabançon in seeking to introduce his name, and endeavouring to gain a hearing in favour of the boon she intended to ask for him.

Had John patiently listened to the suit she wished to introduce, there is no doubt that the major part of his suspicions would have been dispelled; but unluckily for the gallant Sir Raoul, the mere introduction of his name was sufficient to drive the monarch from her presence; and as Isabella shrewdly suspected her husband's irritability was consequent upon the Knight's presumption in carrying off Bertha and placing her in some place beyond his reach, she had rather a malicious pleasure in occasionally bringing, and somewhat abruptly introducing the knight's name in conversation. At length, she could not fail of perceiving, that any further attempt to touch upon the subject might prove dangerous even to herself; and in a subsequent interview she held with the Brabançon, she advised him quietly to withdraw, and whilst the Court were in waiting for the fleet in which they were to

embark, to marry the Kentish beauty at once, trusting to her influence, and his own services to reconcile the monarch after they had reached England.

Sir Raoul relished the advice, and in the certainty of having secured so powerful an advocate, resolved to follow it.

He therefore once more tendered his thanks to the Queen on bended knee, and withdrew from her presence with the intent of secretly setting out at all hazards for the stronghold in which he had secured the lady.

This last interview had been seen by Mauluc, who failed not to advise with the King upon it. He had also heard so much of its purport as to put him in possession of the intentions of the Knight and his journey. Concealing from the King just so much as suited his own purposes, he persuaded him to defer the diabolical vengeance the monarch had resolved to take, and by suffering the Brabançon to leave the Court, first discover where he had concealed Bertha Daundelyonne, and so pounce upon him in his secure hour.

John applauded this counsel amazingly. It

promised him a double gratification ; and as any pursuit, however frivolous, would take him from the most important matters, he resolved himself to engage personally in the adventure.

The zest with which the King entered into what, in the present time, would be called *a spree* of this sort, and which promised him not only amusement but revenge, will scarcely be credited by those of our readers who are unacquainted with some of the extraordinary incidents of his reign ; and by many perhaps we may be accused of somewhat overdrawing his character.

It must be remembered that John, in his reckless pleasures, entirely forgot what was due to his exalted station, and not unfrequently assumed the meanest disguises as well as followed the most dangerous and lawless pursuits, for the gratification of the hour. Nay, at a subsequent period of his reign, and during the time he was in seclusion in the Isle of Wight, he was even known to associate with the rude hordes of outlaws and pirates haunting that island, even accompanying them in their expeditions, and amusing himself with the

scenes of bloodshed and plunder they enacted against his own subjects.

To return to the present adventure. It was hastily arranged between the King and his evil counsellor Mauluc, that they should assume the appearance and dress of two of the Brabançon's followers, and, equipped in the livery of the dragon volant, ride with him in his troop.

In order to arrange this matter speedily, De Bossu was put upon duty, and a couple of the mercenaries having been suddenly and secretly arrested and thrown into prison, their surcoats, upon which the dragon volant was emblazoned, were immediately brought to the King, who, together with Mauluc, as speedily assumed the disguise.

Sir Raoul had resolved to leave the Court soon after midnight; and as the system of espial was carefully organized in John's court, this was soon known to the King.

To manage matters so that himself and his royal master might mingle unsuspected amongst the troop about to accompany the Knight, was to Mauluc comparatively an easy matter; and

a strong body of the Royal Guard having been ordered to follow if possible, without being discovered; the Knight with his party, quite unconscious of the attendance of royalty in his expedition, quietly stole away, and without ceremony or sound of trumpet set forth.

The excitement and delight of the King were so great during this midnight excursion, that his companion feared, notwithstanding his disguise, and the closed visor of the heavy helm he wore, that his frequent bursts of laughter, which he was occasionally obliged to rein back his horse to indulge, would betray them. As however they rode somewhat apart from the cavalcade, and had managed to form a file of the rear-guard, there was less chance of discovery.

For some miles they travelled at a tolerably easy pace, for as the Brabançon well knew that a long journey was before him, he wisely took care not to blow the horses of his party by overspeed at first, but after about a couple of leagues had been gained, they pushed on at a swifter pace.

In this order, they rode for many hours of

the night without drawing bridle ; and as the first faint streaks of dawn began to appear, they turned from the road they had before traversed, and entered a thick forest.

As the party turned into the dark sandy lane, which led into the woods, and which was so thickly overshadowed by the encroaching foliage, that the men-at-arms were obliged to stoop their heads, as they filed into it, Mauluc drew bridle till the whole party were fairly embosomed amongst the trees. He then rose in his stirrups, and darting his lance deep into the sand of the road, left it, with its fluttering banderole, as a direction for their followers to take the same turn.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PROPOSAL.

Away! I do condemn mine ears, that have
So long attended thee.

Thou solicit'st here a lady, that disdains
Thee and the devil alike.

SHAKESPERE.

DURING the long captivity to which Bertha Daundelyonne seemed hopelessly condemned, she thought she could perceive the vigilance of the old crone who tended her, somewhat relax, and by degrees she found that more liberty was allowed her. At times, therefore, when her jailer departed, after visiting her in the morning, she observed that her door was left unfastened, so that the corridor which led from her chamber, along one entire wing of the building, was at her service, as a place of exercise, although the carefully barred doors at its extremity totally precluded all chance of

escape. Still this, together with the liberty she enjoyed of visiting the pleasure-grounds of the chateau, was a great indulgence ; and she spent many hours during the day in looking from the grated windows of the gallery into the gloomy court-yard below. There was, in truth, but little to vary the tedium of her solitude, even in this choice of amusements ; as except the occasional arrival and departure of a messenger or man-at-arms, and now and then the admittance of some wayfarer, mendicant, pilgrim, or wandering minstrel, there was nothing to break the monotony of the heavy time.

The hope, however, which “ springs eternal in the human breast,” led her to expect in each stranger she beheld, some champion ready to deliver her from captivity ; and then again the sickness of the heart consequent upon continued disappointment, as day after day passed without change, began to prey upon her spirits, and affect her health. Like Mariana, in somewhat similar circumstances, her deserted state made her occasionally long for the death which

it seemed was to be the only change she was destined to experience.

All day within the dreary house,
The doors upon their hinges creaked.
The blue-fly sung i'the pane; the mouse
Behind the mouldering wainscot shriek'd,
Or from the crevice peer'd about.
Old faces glimmer'd through the doors,
Old footsteps trod the upper floors,
Strange voices called her from without:
She only said "My life is dreary;
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead*."

It seemed to the fair captive that the garri-son of the chateau had been considerably diminished since she had been its tenant. Even in the short time she had been allowed the opportunity of occasionally remarking from the windows what was going on in the court-yard below, she had noticed that one or two small detachments had left, and had not, to her knowledge, returned. The number of men-at-arms was so reduced, that in place of the lounging figures which heretofore had idled about the dark melancholy square, seeking to pass away the time in occasional athletic games, or sitting in

* Tennyson.

the cool shade of the buildings, employed in dicing and drinking, there were now merely to be seen the sentinels at their posts, or an occasional passer through the court-yard. Still, all her endeavours at discovering the name of the owner of the place, or interesting her female attendant in her cause, either by bribes or entreaties, were unavailing ; and to the hot months of July and August succeeded the refreshing air of the approaching Autumn—and still no change came.

The “uses of adversity,” however, according to the great poet of all time, “are sweet,” and if there was little of variety in the cloistered life, Bertha had been so long leading, a considerable change for the better was wrought in her disposition. The indomitable spirit and overweening pride of the captive were considerably subdued by the discipline she had undergone. Her ultimate fate she felt was doubtful, and what she was eventually reserved for, or might suffer, thus placed in seclusion amidst the lawless beings in whose power she was, she dreaded to contemplate. At length, a change seemed about to take place

in her hitherto monotonous captivity. One morning the wonted dullness of the fortress was broken by sounds betokening the arrival either of the master of the establishment or of some party of importance.

The faint blast of trumpets from without was answered by a lively flourish from the towers of the gate-house within. The ponderous gates were swung open, the portcullis raised, and the heavy tramp of horsemen sounding across the drawbridge, was followed by the clatter of a body of cavalry within the courtyard. The lady gazed upon the unwonted sight with a palpitating heart, and after regarding the iron-clad figures as they dismounted from their steeds, and observing the leader gaze intently up at the window before which she had taken her position, she withdrew and sought her apartment.

The crisis of her fate she felt had arrived, and she prepared to meet it as she best might. She was not long kept in suspense : but a few minutes passed after the arrival of the party, ere a heavy footstep was heard in the corridor, and in the tall completely-armed figure, who

entered and raised the visor of his helm, she recognised the mercenary leader, Sir Raoul de Brabant.

There was an assumption of reckless boldness in his manner which seemed to have been called into play in order to hide the dishonourable conduct of which he was conscious of having been guilty towards one so fair and unprotected.

The lady rose as he entered, and as if she comprehended, the moment she beheld him, that to him she owed her abduction and captivity, she regarded him with a stern and steady gaze, which made him regret that he had not the protection of his closed visor to hide his abashed countenance.

The royal blood of the Saxon showed conspicuous in the look with which—and without uttering a syllable—she regarded her captor. Not a sentence passed between the pair for some moments, and the Brabançon, notwithstanding the natural insolence of his disposition, felt that he would have given something considerable if his prisoner would only begin the conversation in which, it struck him, he him-

self was about to play but a contemptible and villanous part.

“Lady,” he said at length, dropping his eyes under her steady gaze, whilst with the point of his rapier he appeared drawing figures upon the floor, “for your humble slave to attempt excuse for the conduct he has pursued towards one so fair and exquisite, would, I fear, be vain.”

“I am then right, Sir,” she returned, “in conjecturing from your words and presence here, that in Sir Raoul de Brabant I behold the person through whose instrumentality I have been brought hither, and so long kept in confinement.”

“Such, I fear, lady,” replied the knight, with assumed hardihood, “will be found to be the case.”

The suspicions of Bertha, which had always harped upon the King, still were wide of the truth, as she even yet supposed the mercenary had acted under the monarch’s orders in the business.

“And who, Sir Knight,” she continued, “has had the hardihood to employ you in so

base and villanous an act,—an act which will go far to degrade you from the title of chivalry your former deeds of fame have earned you, and display you to the world as a base recreant—a coward unfit to breathe where men of honour assemble,—no longer knight, but a scoundrel knave*.

The hot blood which flowed in the veins of a Daundelyonne, was now indeed fairly aroused, and the mercenary was for the moment astonished at the fierce eye she bent upon him. He, however, endeavoured to carry it off in as gallant a style as he could command.

“Alas, lady,” he said, throwing himself on one knee, “I have already pleaded that all attempt at excuse would be even worse than the crime I have committed against one so exquisite. In your own surpassing beauty you must seek the cause of my offence. Love, Lady, love strong as death, hath led me thus to err; a crime for which I am the more hopeful of pardon, since the exciting cause is

* When a knight was degraded, among other ceremonies the herald proclaimed him “No longer knight, but, a scoundrel knave.”

in some sort made a sufferer whilst she inflicts her torments."

The lady started back either in real or assumed amazement as she listened to the confession of the knight, and the most concentrated and haughty expression of scorn appeared in her regal features.

"Love for me, Sir Raoul of Brabant!" she exclaimed; "for me, whom thou hast scarce beheld thrice! Thou art surely mad to urge so ridiculous an excuse for thy villany."

"Nay, Lady," urged the Knight; "say rather for my boldness in wooing. The Lady Bertha Daundelyonne need scarce be told that he who once has the misfortune to encounter that ray of loveliness can never hope for happiness again. I have but done that which all men if they dared, would attempt, and made the prize my own. In fine, Lady," continued the Knight, rising to his feet, as he grew more assured, "I have to crave your pardon for the stratagem I have used in bringing you within the shelter of my towers, and indeed saving you from the unlicensed passion of the King. I have wooed as a soldier should woo his bride,

and the daughter of a soldier I trust will, after a moment's reflection, better appreciate my suit."

"The daughter of a soldier, 'sir," returned the Lady, "will better appreciate Sir Raoul de Brabant, if he strive instantly to repair the wrong he has done by restoring her to the protection of her parent: otherwise he will find the awakened wrath of that parent as quick and fatal as the monarch of the forest from which he derives his name."

"It may not be, Lady," returned the Knight, "nor will Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne ever look upon his haughty daughter again, but as the bride of him you scorn. Remember," he continued, "you are now in my power, far from all help; alone, without the companionship of a single female, except the faithful dependent who attends us here. Nay, 'tis useless to discuss the matter further. I give you till midnight to consider of my suit, when the priest shall attend us in the hall, and everything be in readiness for the celebration of our nuptials. Nay," continued the vain Knight, angered at the apparent disgust with which his suit

was received, "you shall either become the willing bride of Sir Raoul of Brabant, or I will have you dragged by force to the altar."

"I will proclaim thee through Christendom," answered the astonished Bertha, "for the stain of thine order: at the very footstool of John of England will I proclaim thee, for reckless as he is, he could never sanction such villany."

"It will be useless, Lady," said the Knight, retiring; "I have royal sanction for what I do. Farewell; I grant you the indulgence I have named, and then no earthly power can alter my determination."

"Nay, for the love of Heaven," said the Lady, losing her firmness, "hear me, Sir Knight, but one word."

The Knight, however, was gone; the door closed, and the ponderous lock revolved in its fastening, as Bertha sank in a swoon upon the floor.

Although Sir Roaul de Brabant lived in an age when the most unscrupulous conduct was oftentimes practised towards the gentler sex with impunity, he well knew that his present adventure was likely to bring him into considerable

hazard, both with the English monarch and the friends of the Lady; he, however, trusted to the secret services he had performed for a ready pardon from John; and considering that when once fairly married, the Knight of Daundelyonne would be wise enough to make the best of it, he hoped that in the end matters would turn out entirely to his own satisfaction. He also was aware that Sir Gilbert, whose wrath he, in truth, feared more than any other danger, was at present not only out of the royal favour, but likely, if he presumed even to make his appearance, to be subjected to punishment. As far, also, as such a man could feel the passion of love, he was enamoured of the exceeding beauty of his captive.

The reception he had met with from her had a little dashed his self-conceit; for he considered his burly person irresistible amongst the fair sex, and he gave himself no little credit for the strictly honourable way in which—the object of his passion being completely in his power,—he meant to behave to her.

Meanwhile, in preparation for the ceremony, and for the feast he intended to give to the

companions he had brought with him, the day passed, whilst he himself retired to his chamber, in order to sleep off the fatigue of his long and hurried journey.

Those also who were not immediately on duty in the chateau, were glad to snatch a short repose, more especially that they knew not how soon their services would be again required for the road.

Amongst the men-at-arms who "quitted not the harness bright," and who watched beside the guard-room fire of the gate-house, sat the disguised monarch and his equerry, and perhaps of all that reckless company none appeared more light-hearted and jovial.

They diced, they drank, they trolled forth the catch, and they shouted in their glee with the merriest there. It was precisely in such a situation and scene that John most enjoyed life, and most completely got rid of the secret monitor which tugged at his heart-strings, and reminded him of his evil deeds.

Mauluc, however, kept a steady eye upon all that was going on. He knew the hour at which the marriage ceremony was to be per-

formed ; and, as he occasionally lounged about the court-yard with others of the guard, he picked up all the news of the interior, which he carefully conveyed to his royal master. Further, although it was somewhat dangerous and contrary to orders to straggle far from the chateau—he managed towards evening to hold a short parley with the leader of the royal party, which, according to previous direction, with their horses piqueted in a convenient spot, were lying, perdue, in the thick forest, not a quarter of a mile in rear of the building.

So passed the day ; the evening fell, and the shadows of night descending upon the chateau, the hour approached which Sir Raoul had fixed for the celebration of his nuptials.

CHAPTER IX.

A WEDDING PARTY.

And, will you, nill you, I will marry you.

SHAKESPERE.

WHEN the unhappy Bertha returned to a full consciousness of her situation, she felt almost reduced to a state of despair. Hope, "the medicine of the miserable," seemed to have deserted her; and all the courage and pride of her race was for the moment prostrated before the fate which now seemed inevitable. How she succeeded in passing that long and wearisome day with such a prospect awaiting its termination, without losing her reason, she often wondered in after-life.

She was now, she found, a close prisoner; and, in order that she might have full opportunity of considering the proposals her admirer had made, with the exception of a visit from

her accustomed attendant, she was left to the uninterrupted enjoyment of her own thoughts during the entire day. Like the condemned wretch who marks the departing moments as they shorten the period of existence, so did the unhappy lady feel the fleeting time glide on towards the dark hour of her life. Left thus to her own dismal reflections, without the consolation of a friend to consult in her utmost need, her mind became a perfect chaos; during which, she resolved on the most desperate course, rather than submit to the hated nuptials proposed to her.

Unsheathing a small poniard which she always carried in her bosom, she resolved, as she gazed upon its glittering blade, that the hour which gave her to her hateful suitor should see it sheathed in her heart.

As the day wore on, it appeared gloomy and ominous as her own miserable prospects; and as night approached, the increasing winds blew a perfect hurricane; whilst the deep-mouthed thunder, which had gradually rumbled from a distance, now crashed immediately over the chateau, preceded by vivid flashes of

lightning, which darted in ghastly streaks, and seemed sporting with the different articles of furniture in her chamber. At any other period, the warfare of the elements would have greatly terrified her ; but at the present moment, and in the absence of all communication with her fellow-creatures, it served to withdraw her thoughts in some measure from her own griefs.

At length the hour approached which promised to consign her to a fate she considered worse than death in its worst shape ; and throwing herself on her knees before the crucifix on her table, she prayed for strength to enable her to escape its terrors. The next minute, the door of her prison-house was thrown open, and a couple of the Knight's attendants stood before her.

Sir Raoul had been true to his word, and although he avoided once more visiting his captive alone, before the ceremony, he had given directions to his myrmidons, that if the lady declined giving her attendance at the altar, they were to convey her thither by force. All remonstrance and entreaty she therefore found

unavailing. Her stern summoners had not the power, even if they had the will, to disobey their instructions; and as they advanced to seize her in their powerful gripe, all the indulgence she could procure from them, was permission that the old crone who had been her jailer, might accompany her.

“Offer no further violence, sirs,” she said scornfully, as she threw her veil over her lovely countenance. “I put my confidence in that Being who never deserts those who trust in his aid. Lead on ; I attend you.”

The midnight bell tolled on with the drowsy race of night, as the bridal party assembled in the great hall of the Chateau Birslenon. Traces of the former grandeur of the building were yet to be seen in this apartment, although in the hands of its present possessor the place itself was little better than a sort of robber-hold; and being mostly filled with a garrison composed of devils rather than men, had been the scene of many a cruel and atrocious piece of villany.

The proud banner, however, of its former proprietor, whom the place no longer knew,

still hung in tattered shreds from either side its rafted roof, shadowy and frail as the cobwebs with which they were incrustated. The rusted helm, too, the shield, and the ponderous armoury, which had blackened in the glowing sun of Palestine, seemed to hang as the mournful emblems of a noble race, now extinct and forgotten in the very halls they had reared in their pride and prosperity.

As the Lady Bertha was conducted into the hall, she found it occupied by the assembled party, which consisted of the expectant bridegroom, the monk he had procured to officiate, and—as he wished to give publicity to the nuptials amongst his own followers—several of his retainers and men-at-arms.

The Knight himself, divested of his heavy chain armour, now shone out in as gay a suit of habiliments as the haste and circumstances of the occasion would permit; and, in his own opinion, was a most winning figure for a lady's eye. Availing himself of the trunk-mail which happened to be in the apartment of the chateau he inhabited, he had arrayed himself in a long mantle of white cloth trimmed with gold, and

gathered in at the waist by a jewelled girdle, which also contained his anelace, or dagger, the hilt of which was set with precious stones. His hose were of crimson cloth, powdered with gold, and the points of his black velvet shoes were so long that they were fastened to his knees by glittering chains.

The lamps, which burned in a sort of rude iron cresset, here and there pendant from the roof, shed a flaring and lurid glow around. A long table occupied the centre of the apartment, on which were spread the viands for the feast which was immediately to follow the marriage; and at which the only person at present seated was the officiating priest, a corpulent and jolly-looking churchman, who seemed to gloat in anticipation over the dainties he was to share after the ceremony. At the upper end of the hall, and upon the raised dais, stood a large crucifix, elaborately carved in oak, which had been hastily torn down from the ruinous chapel of the building. This, together with a heavy oaken table, containing two flaring wax tapers in large silver candlesticks, formed the altar.

Few situations could be more wretched than that to which Bertha Daundelyonne was now reduced. Alone, at the mercy of a coarse-minded ruffian, and unfriended, she was dragged to the altar like some criminal to the block. As her conductors led her into the hall, her persecutor stepped from the midst of his assembled party with jaunting step and affected carriage, and himself conducted her towards the upper end of the apartment.

“Permit me, Lady,” he said, placing his hand with offensive freedom upon her veil, “to lift the envious curtain which hides us from that heaven of beauty we are so near.”

The lady drew back, and raising her veil, gazed eagerly around her, displaying a countenance which, although pallid and deathlike in hue, was still far beyond anything to which the painted flourish of the Knight’s tongue could at the moment have likened it. It appeared yet more lovely from the contrast it presented to the grim features and dark scowling looks of those immediately around, and the iron visors of the men-at-arms who,

gathered from the court of guard, stood in the back-ground.

It had been the intention of the unhappy Bertha to throw herself upon the mercy of the priest who was to officiate; to claim the protection of his holy character, and protesting against the violence offered her, to entreat him to save her from the hateful fate with which she was threatened.

A single glance, however, at the besotted individual who had been suborned to officiate, showed her she had little to hope from his interference. He was already, to all appearance, in the first stage of drunkenness. Still, she clung to the hope of his interference as the drowning wretch clutches at a straw on the surface; and throwing herself on her knees at his feet, she implored him, as he hoped for mercy at the hands of the Supreme Being he professed to serve, to save her from the nuptials with which she was threatened.

The churchman was evidently moved at her distress, and his faculties, which had been absorbed in deep potations, already imbibed as a

prelude to the soaking to which he meant anon to submit himself, so far returned, that he began to consider there might be disagreeable consequences attending the officiating minister of so unscrupulous a marriage. His eye wandered from the well-spread board and sparkling liquors to the distressed suppliant at his feet, and then to the countenance of his employer, with a sort of drunken doubt as to the respectability of his situation.

“Sir Raoul de Brabant,” he at length stammered out, “I have been summoned here to officiate at the holy ceremony of marriage, and to partake of the savoury viands your board displayeth, with yourself and the noble bride. Nevertheless, I knew not that the lady was not a consenting party to her own nuptials, nay, that she had such an insuperable aversion to be linked in holy matrimony. Certes, this passes; and I had rather take counsel with my superior ere I proceed in the business.”

Sir Raoul was considerably annoyed at the scruples of his chaplain, which he by no means expected. He resolved to overrule his objection; and taking the churchman aside,

desired him to proceed instantly with the ceremony.

“ Might not a short delay be granted?” urged the priest. “ Methinks, if your honour would but so far respite this fair damsel, as to permit the supper to be served ere the ceremony take place, we might reason with her on the propriety of dismissing the fears with which she seems, in sooth, overcome. A stoup or two of claret might do much towards reassuring both of us; for, truth to say, I am myself somewhat overcome with flatulence and the fumes of an empty stomach.”

“ What, ho, there!” cried the Knight, “ a cup of wine for the holy friar. I will grant no delay, Priest,” he continued; “ and by my halidame, if you proceed not instantly with the ceremony, I will have thy shaven crown stripped over thine ears like the red cap of some juggling cardinal.” The monk shuddered, for he well knew that in matters of hardihood and cruelty, the Knight was a man of his word.

“ I have then no choice in the matter,” he said; “ nevertheless, I take this goodly com-

pany to witness, it is an enforced ceremony. I act upon compulsion. Our Lady have pardon upon me for the sin!"

"Buy out thy pardon, if sin there be," said Sir Raoul with a sneer, "with the rich guerdon I pay thee. Meanwhile, proceed with your mummerly at once, lest I hand thee over to the tender mercies of my people here, who will take out an enforced penance in stripes upon thy hypocritical carcase."

"Nay, then, my scruples are overruled," said the Monk in a hurry. "No man can withstand threats and bribery at the same time. Nevertheless, I wash my hands of the whole affair, as I wash my throat with this goblet of hippocras. It is an enforced ceremony, and I am the martyr. I wish this lady every happiness in her choice—no, not choice either,—in her martyrdom—marriage, I would say. Holy mother, how catholic this liquor is! nevertheless, I would my shoes had been filled with flint stones ere I put them on to obey the summons hither."

Thus saying, the threatened churchman took

his missal, bottom upwards, in his hand, and prepared to commence the ceremony.

The courage of Bertha, which had hitherto sustained her, in the hope of being able to interest the priest in her favour, seemed now about to give way. She appeared almost unable to support herself, and as her hand appeared to be searching for something in the bosom of her tunic, she leaned against one of the pillars of the hall for support.

At this moment, however, a figure which had been standing in the gloom somewhat behind the lady, suddenly advanced to her side and whispered hope and comfort in her ear.

“Be of good courage,” he said to her in a low voice, whilst the priest was fumbling with his missal, “succour will come when you least expect it.”

The lady startled and turned eagerly towards the speaker; but the figure withdrew within the shadow of the pillar behind which he had been standing, and placed a finger upon the bars of his helmet, as if to caution

her to silence. As the monk commenced the ceremony, he again approached and once more addressed her—

“Put your trust in Heaven and assent to the matter in hand,” he said. “Succour, I repeat, will come, whence you least expect favour.”

The Brabançon who now saw his hopes on the eve of being realized, already began to congratulate himself on the happiness of possessing so exquisite a bride, and the fate of the hapless Bertha seemed about to be sealed.

The old adage, however, of the cup and the lip, was in the present instance exemplified: for, ere the priest had hiccuped half a dozen words, one of the spectators, who to all appearance from his outward habiliments, was a follower of the bridegroom, at this moment quietly stepped up to the altar, and, after regarding the bemused monk for a moment, lifted his sheathed rapier, and dealt him so severe a blow upon the knuckles that he struck the missal from his hands.

“Hold!” he said to the astonished eccle-

siastic, whose fingers ached with the severity of the blow. "Methinks, in a matter of so much importance as the marriage of one of the royal wards, there are other parties to be consulted besides the bride, bridegroom, and the officiating minister."

The voice of the speaker, as it issued through the closed visor of his helm, sounded harsh and grating on the Brabançon's ear, whilst all assembled gazed in wonder and amazement as to what was about to happen next. With a countenance in which fear, astonishment, and indignation, produced a somewhat ludicrous expression, the impatient bridegroom continued to gaze upon the bold intruder for some moments, ere he could find words to demand the meaning of this interruption.

The voice at first had struck him with consternation, but as he marked the outward favour of the stranger he somewhat recovered his self-possession.

"Now, by all the saints of Hainault, Nevers, and Ponthieu," he said, "but this is something strange! Speak, Sir Knave, is it a jest thou

art putting upon us, or what, in the fiend's name, is the meaning of so impudent a proceeding, and what art thou?"

"An unbidden guest, we fear, at your nuptials, Sir Knight," returned the other. "Nevertheless, one methinks whose consent and presence might have been asked, since the nuptials of a royal ward should at least be graced by some one having authority from the King, lest his possessions become forfeit to his immediate lord."

"And who art thou, then," faltered forth the Brabançon, "who wearest the badge of one of my followers, and yet speakest of being in the service of John of England?"

"John of England himself!" returned the other, unfastening the visor of his helm and discovering the veritable features of the King, as he threw the casque upon the pavement of the hall, "John of England himself, a poor friend of thine once, Sir Raoul de Brabant—one who would fain see thee properly mated and decently wedded, and therefore are we come an unbidden guest to your chateau here. What say ye, my masters all?" continued

the King, throwing himself into a chair which stood near, and gazing around upon the astonished and dismayed party, many of whom sank upon one knee, "methinks, we have some reason to feel slighted in this matter. Sir Raoul de Brabant having made choice of the fairest ward we possessed in our English dominions, hath not even named to us the hour of his wedding, or invited us to the nuptial feast."

CHAPTER X.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

Haste still pays haste, and leisure answers leisure ;
Like doth quit like, and measure still for measure.

SHAKESPERE.

HAD the sepulchre “opened its ponderous and marble jaws” before his feet, the mercenary could scarce have looked more aghast; and whilst he gazed upon that dark swarthy countenance, as it grinned in horrible mockery at his alarm, its dreadful eye fixed in terrible ruin upon his pallid face, he seemed perfectly paralyzed with fear. At first he thought the figure before him was an apparition. But, as his eye again ran over the outward habiliments of the King, he was suddenly struck with the truth, and he immediately saw that his fate was sealed unless he could contrive to escape. Running his eye over the assemblage immediately around, whilst the King sat enjoying

his dismay, it suddenly struck the mercenary that John had in one of his half-insane moods ventured thus to thrust himself into his stronghold unattended; in which case he resolved to make him bitterly rue his temerity, and at the same time escape with his intended bride.

One who had been so deep a participator in the secret villanies of John, and had rendered him so many services in aid of his deep and diabolical schemes, well knew that the Monarch would be glad of any pretext to cancel the obligation he was under to such an instrument, "even with the bloody payment of his death." Thus, then, the sometime confidant of dangerous majesty, the abductor of a princess of Brittany, the secret contriver of death and torture towards the innocent Arthur, found himself confronted before his employer, "the poisoned chalice commended to his own lips." Like the wolf at bay, he considered his only chance of escape was by a bold dash at his opponent.

"Your Highness," he said, after recovering his self-possession, "has not done well to venture upon bearding the lion in his den."

“Say, rather,” said John with a sneer, “in tracking the fox into his hole. But we are, however, not altogether unattended in our visit. We come a jolly company to your bridal feast, Sir Knight, and mean to taste the viands you have prepared here.”

The pallid features of the mercenary turned still more deathlike as his eye sought the lower end of the hall in which the royal guards were now assembled. Escape, he saw, was out of the question, and all resistance, with the handful of men composing his own garrison, vain. His people had evidently been surprised and the place was in the possession of his foes.

It has been observed, that the insolence of base minds in success is boundless, and that it would scarce admit of a comparison, did not themselves furnish us with one when reverse bows them to baseness and servility. Such was the case in the present instance ; the Knight casting himself to the earth before the King, and in the most abject manner craving pardon and begging mercy at his hands.

Meanwhile, during the foregoing scene,

whilst joy, astonishment, and dismay alternately possessed Bertha Daundelyonne, she seemed to have been almost forgotten by the principal actors. At the first interruption she thought some friendly hand was about to interfere in her behalf. The next moment, however, her astonishment at the sudden appearance of the King naturally gave place to terror when she found that to his interference she owed the present interruption to so hateful a marriage. For the moment, she thought of endeavouring to escape, and had actually withdrawn a pace from the throng, and looked eagerly around, when the same mysterious figure who had before addressed her, on observing the movement, again glided from his concealment and placed himself by her side.

“Remain quiet,” he said, “for the present. To attempt escape at this juncture would be ruin. Enough: when the time comes I will give the signal. Then, and not till then, make the effort.”

“Am I right in supposing I recognise the voice of an old and tried follower, one who

never deceived the Daundelyonne?" inquired Bertha.

"Mystery magnifies danger as the fog the sun," replied the other. "Nevertheless, anon I shall appear in my own favour. I cannot say more whilst your attendant stands beside you. Mark what follows, for the drama is now in progress, and your cue will come in good time."

When the vile and remorseless fall into hands wicked and cruel as their own, we read their fate with horror, but no jot of pity is called forth. The irate King was now in the height of his glory, and, as he turned his ruinous glance from the humbled mercenary, his eye rested upon the extraordinary figure of the malignant old hag, who, at the request of Bertha, had accompanied her into the hall. As she stood beside her lovely charge the miserable crone appeared even more hideous than nature had made her.

"Ha!" said the King, after regarding the aged dame with curiosity, and as if communing with the thoughts so singular-looking an individual had conjured up, "Ha!" turning

to the knights, and affecting a clemency which the malignancy of his smile belied, "Rise, Sir Raoul de Brabant; we came hither to assist at thy wedding; and by our Lady's grace we will not hence till we have seen thee mated as befits a man of thy merit. Ha! by Saint Paul, what think ye, Sir Walter?" he continued, as Mauluc, having conducted the guard into the hall now approached and stood beside his master's chair. "One who hath played so bold a game for a bride,—nay, who hath rivalled so many men, ourself into the bargain, deserves not to be altogether baffled. What think ye, Sir Walter? Albeit we find it inconvenient to bestow the heiress of Daundelyonne upon our worthy ally here, what think ye," pointing to the hideous old woman, "of mating him with yonder blooming beauty? Methinks so splendid an alliance would better suit the aspiring gallant."

This idea afforded so much amusement to the King and Mauluc that they laughed aloud for some moments. At length the monarch arose, and approaching Bertha Daundelyonne himself handed her to the seat he had pre-

viously occupied. He then desired Mauluc to lead the ill-favoured attendant forward.

“Lead that lovely specimen of the female sex to the altar, Sir Walter Mauluc,” he said. “Thou shalt perform the part of father to the damsel, and give her away. Nay,” he continued jeeringly to the Brabançon, “’tis hard, Sir Raoul, to be altogether unwived. We therefore give our royal assent to your changing from the lovely Bertha Daundelyonne, and fixing your choice upon yonder peerless specimen with the curved back. So much loveliness, methinks, seldom falleth to the share of mortal man.”

To paint the astonishment and dismay of the mercenary at this stage of the proceedings would be difficult. He saw that his fate was sealed, and that, like the cat with its captured prey beneath its claws, his tormentor was determined to sport with the victim ere he give it the *coup de grace*. Much as he loved life, and feared death, he would almost have preferred torture to the disgrace of such a marriage. But he well knew that John

having once conceived such a project would be likely to carry it out.

“Nay, spare me this dishonour,” he said to the King. “In my own halls, and before the faces of my people, your Majesty will scarce put such an affront upon me. Remember, my gracious liege, the many services I have performed.”

“Didst thou show mercy to the unhappy Arthur at Falaise?” whispered the mysterious person who had before addressed Bertha, and who at this moment placed himself close beside the Brabançon; “didst thou heed the tears and entreaties of the crushed worm when in your power? Whoso dreads punishment, suffers it; whoso deserves it, dreads it.”

The Brabançon started and looked confounded, whilst his taunter unfastening the clasps of his helmet, as he brushed up the cockscomb which crested his hood, displayed the countenance of Gondibert the Jester.

“What, our bold cousin,” said the King, as soon as he recognised him, “hast thou too thrust thy motley coat into harness, and ac-

compained us? By the mass, thou art welcome as flowers in May; we wanted but thy sallies here to make our happiness complete."

"Nay, cousin John," replied the Jester, "I thought when I saw your royalty assuming its present disguise there would be sport toward. I therefore crushed my poor limbs in a steel covering also, and here I am to assist in the diversions. Come, Sir Knight," he added, turning to the mercenary, "we trifle time here by delay. I commend the wisdom you have displayed in the selection; it is said that in choosing his mate a man should consider which he most wants, a wife or a nurse. Here you will find yourself accommodated with both."

The mercenary bent a savage and threatening look upon the Jester. His hand stole towards his anelace, but with a strong effort, he suppressed his rage. His eye traversed the dark circle of attendants and men-at-arms around, as if to observe what chance there was for him, if he ventured to strike a blow for freedom, and in how far he might depend upon support from his own people; whilst the incor-

rigible Gondibert annoyed him by fresh taunts every moment.

"Tush, man," he said, as the Brabançon made a last appeal to the King; "you do but swallow the pill you would have forced upon another. You promised yourself to take it gilded, but it now tastes bitter as aconite, or wolf's-bane, in the mouth. Hold your nose, man, and gulp; the dose must go down. Stand forth, my blooming Hebe," he continued, addressing the old dame; "the viands fall from the spit, and the supper is ruined whilst we talk."

"Sir Walter Mauluc," said the Brabançon, "wilt thou, too, stand by and see thy friend, one who hath been sworn brother* to thee, thus sacrificed, without a word in his favour?"

"That will he, in sooth," said Gondibert. "Thou gettest no help at the hands of thy

* The "Fratres Pirati" of the middle ages were those knights who professed the most sincere and lasting friendship for each other, and called themselves sworn brothers in peace and war. They were sworn to aid each other in danger and adversity, and to divide equally all their acquisitions. The Count of Champagne, the Troubadour Prince, and Richard, the common friends of the Count, were all three *Fratres Pirati*.

sworn brother, for thou hast checkmated him during thy firm friendship. Intimacy, I have observed, is oftener the father of deadly hate than firm friendship. Pshaw, man," he continued in a low voice, to the overwhelmed Brabançon. "Strike a blow for thine own freedom, in thine own halls. Call up your dragon brood, here around you, to the rescue."

"By the eternal devil!" exclaimed the mercenary, "thou sayest true. Up, dragons," he shouted, starting back, and unsheathing his sword like lightning. "Up, dragons, and help your chief."

The followers of Sir Raoul, although few in number, at the instigation of Gondibert, who had before secretly incited them to attempt the rescue of their captain, upon this summons rallied around their leader, and drew their weapons ; whilst the royal guard at the same moment advancing upon them, a terrible scene of confusion ensued, during which the tables were overthrown, and the priest was knocked down, and trodden under foot.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FLIGHT.

Rosalind. O, Jupiter! how weary are my spirits!

Touchstone. I care not for my spirits, if my legs were not weary.

Celia. I pray you, bear with me ; I cannot go any further.

Touchstone. For my part, I had rather bear with you, than bear you. Yet I should bear no cross if I did bear you ; for, I think, you have no money in your purse.

SHAKESPEARE.

DURING the confusion of the scene, and whilst the whole attention of the King was given to the capture of Sir Raoul, Gondibert seized upon the arm of Bertha, and led her through the press, towards the lower end of the hall.

“Quick !” he exclaimed. “This is the moment, which once neglected, never returns.”

As he said this, he led his charge, unobserved, to the court-yard of the chateau, and hurried onward with her towards the main entrance of the building.

“Are there no means of escape, but through the principal entrance?” inquired Bertha. “If not, alas, I fear—”

“Our chance is but a hungry one,” returned the Jester. “True, lady ; but bad as the chance is, we must try it. Death and dishonour are behind us, and no certainty of escape in front. But forward is the better word of command, in most cases. Yonder riot hath most likely called away the main body of the guard.”

The next moment, as they passed under the dark arch of the gate-house, they were challenged. Gondibert immediately gave the counter-sign.

“It will not suffice,” said the sentinel ; “my orders are strict, to-night. No one can pass out of the fortress.”

“Orders are, doubtless, to be obeyed,” returned Gondibert. “You have yours, I doubt not, and very sufficiently issued. Nevertheless, orders are sometimes to be superseded by newer commands. I am sent forward by the King’s order, this moment delivered. Look ye,

friend, I bear his signet; that, I opine, removes all doubt."

The man-at-arms hastily looked at the ring. It was, indeed, the royal signet; but the instructions for his post had been so peremptory, that he called to his superior from the small guard-house within the tower.

The superior looked at the signet, doubtfully. "What turmoil is that within the building yonder?" he said.

"It is a mutiny amongst those scum of Brabant," replied the Jester. "They have refused their consent to the arrest of the leader. Nay, I recommend that you send off what assistance you can spare. The King may be endangered in this paltry riot."

"Pass out," said the officer, hastening to call out the gate-house guard; and the next moment, Gondibert and his fair charge had safely crossed the draw-bridge. The rain was pouring down in torrents, as they gained the open space, and the Jester paused and considered for a moment ere he proceeded.—"Here we are, in the open world," he said; "and which

direction to take, it passes my wisdom to decide. The night is dark as pitch, and the sky pours down mischief. Now, what's to be done?"

"Take any direction, good Gondibert," cried the Lady, "so it lead us from those hateful walls. The most savage hold in the wildest forest shall be a welcome refuge."

"Ah! that's vastly well observed," said the Jester; "and if I knew of any hold, be it savage or civil, I might adventure to find it. But here we are, in an unknown forest, in the dead of night, without horses to aid our escape; if our enemies fail in overtaking us, the wolves will not. In that case, I fear we shall find we had better have trusted to fortune where we were."

"Alas!" exclaimed Bertha; "then I fear, good Gondibert, your kindness has but involved you in my own inevitable ruin. I am unable to advise."

"Nay," said Gondibert, "I meant not to dash your spirits unnecessarily; for Heaven knows, you will want all your energies this night. Ha! yonder vivid flash hath shown

me a vista in the wood; we will adventure down it. At least, we shall have some sort of shelter; and we must get out of this dismal forest, if possible, ere morning dawn."

"And whither, then, can we fly, Gondibert?" inquired Bertha. "I know of no refuge in this dreadful country."

"To England, if we can get there," replied Gondibert. "But sooth to say, the chances seem against our reaching it."

It was, indeed, a dreadful night, in which to commence their escape. But, as the Jester wisely observed, with a view to re-assure his charge, there was likely to be worse fortune for them within doors than without; and the sooner they gained the shelter of the roughest thicket in the wood, the better. "We shall find no beasts of prey worse than the human foes we are leaving, fair lady," he concluded. "So here's for the thicket. We have, if I judge rightly, a short start of our enemies; for the eccentric John will be so taken up with the nuptials he has just thought of, that he will scarce rest till he has witnessed the performance of the ceremony. He will then

either hang or imprison the bridegroom, ere he take his supper; and, when seated at the board, both you and I shall be missed, inquired, and sought for. But come, be of good courage, and droop not at the first difficulty. 'Tis the mind that fatigues the body. Nobody knows what strength he has till he try. 'Use legs and have legs,' is a good proverb; and those who set out with but a weak understanding, will find themselves both wiser stronger by exertion, than even the vigorous who stand still and do nothing. Heavens! what a flash was there. The very trees look like spectres, and yet they are but trees after all, you see. So it is with the difficulties of life, most of which are of our own raising. And these hideous giants, which appear unconquerable, if we grapple them resolutely, we shall find but ordinary monsters after all. Therefore, courage lady; and let not our own minds depress our own bodies. Only fancy you are going fowling in the woods, and you will forget anxiety, in anticipation of sport."

Whilst the Jester thus ran on, they gained the shelter of the thick forest, and proceeded along the vista he had observed for some distance.

“Now,” he continued, “I begin to feel somewhat more secure; since, if hotly pursued, we can make a dash for it, on one side or the other, where nought but a hound would be likely to track us. Oh, if the silver visage of my lady moon would but smile upon our efforts for a brief space, I might hope even to find my way in this labyrinth.”

The ardent desire of setting space between themselves and their enemies caused the roughness of the weather to be almost unthought of by the fugitives.

Gondibert, who was a powerful man, with his arm round the lady's waist, assisted her onward for some miles, midst the pealing thunder, the flashes of the lightning, and the howling wind. But as distance lessened their immediate fear of capture, he began to feel more anxiety about the unprotected state of his charge against the fury of the elements.

“Here’s weather,” he said, “to pour down upon the bare head of a lady, cradled in luxury and comfort!”

“Heed it not, Gondibert,” said Bertha; “so we can attain but some shelter from our enemies, I care not for the storm. Is there no hut or shed you can find?”

“Nay,” said Gondibert, “I know but little of these parts; but, from the pace we have travelled, and the direction we have taken, it strikes me there must be a sort of shelter not far from this very spot. Could we but gain it, I should say we were born lucky, notwithstanding all we have yet endured. I noted a ruinous building in this forest one day, when hunting with the King; it can’t be many hundred yards from us. So, courage, Lady. Yet, hark! what sounds were those? Ah! by my fay, ’tis as I feared. The wolves are upon our track.”

As Gondibert spoke, the hounding cry of wolves in full chase was plainly heard in the distance. The faithful heart of the Jester sank at the sound, for well he knew that, if these savage animals came upon them in any

number, they would both be torn to pieces in spite of all his efforts.

He stopped, and looked around him. The storm had somewhat subsided, whilst they had hurried onwards; and, as the clouds rolled beneath the moon, the scene on either side became more visible. His piercing eye seemed to penetrate into its very recesses. They had reached a part of the forest somewhat more open; its massive foliage, and thick tangled underwood, giving place to the prickling gorse and fern; the stunted oak only here and there spreading its broad arms across the wider space.

There are periods in men's lives when moments seem to supply the work of years. Such a period had the Jester now arrived at. The ominous howl of the wolf was in his ears; and, as his acute senses were bent to mark each object, in the hope of recognising the locality, he felt that moments were now precious as years to himself and companion.

"Our estate," he said "is that of the vessel in a fog. I know where the breakers lie, for I can hear them roar, but which way I am to

steer to avoid them I can hardly tell. On this spot of earth I have certainly been before, and hereabouts there is a ruinous hovel, which we must gain in a few moments more or we perish. 'Tis now as in our course of life—the right direction leads to success, the wrong to death. Ha!" he continued, as the moon shone out more brightly, "either my eyes deceive me, or yonder is the spot I remember to have noticed. Haste, Lady!" and he once more urged Bertha onwards. "Fight for it we must; but, when outnumbered, 'tis better to fight behind stone-walls than in the open plain."

Even while he spoke, the leader of the savage troop came ravening on. The Jester's eye had not deceived him. On a small mound, and so regular as to appear as if it were raised by artificial means, stood the remains of a strong fortress, partly encircled by a ruinous wall. For this he made with all speed; and leading the lady up the ascent, endeavoured to gain a small opening, or sally-port, situated in the flanking wall. It seemed, however, that the

race would be hotly contested. Could he succeed in gaining the sally-port, he might make a stand there, and with his ponderous sword keep the fierce animals at bay, whilst the lady sought some place of safety in the tower, but they were still some distance from it.

“Two legs make but a bad flight of it against four,” he said; “we must make arms help legs, or all will be lost.”

The foremost of the troop, a large and fearful-looking beast, at this moment sprang upon them, when, with one blow of his heavy blade, Gondibert broke his back.

The fierce nature of the animals they had to contend against was now sufficiently apparent; for, as the brute rolled howling on the ground, his companions turned upon it, and tore it limb from limb.

“That’s an offering wherewith to stay their stomachs for the present, at any rate,” said Gondibert. “Hasten on, Lady, in Heaven’s name, and try to gain the opening in the main wall of the tower, whilst I follow at more leisure, and give battle to these ravenous beasts.”

“Nay, good Gondibert,” said the terrified Bertha, “I will not consent to accept of safety unless you share it with me.”

“On, then,” urged Gondibert, “for the pack increases every minute. See how they swarm over the very odour of their carrion comrade, even though they have devoured him. Ah! and here they come again!”

Few things in nature present a greater contrast than the same landscape under different aspects. The storm had now completely subsided; and as the bright moon shed her silver light over the grassy knoll upon which the ruin stood, the dark forest in the distance, and the trees of the space between, glittering with rain-drops, the whole scene presented a very different appearance from the same dismal-looking forest of a few minutes before. Could the fugitives have found time to mark its beauty, they would doubtless have enjoyed it. As it was, the fairest scene in nature was to them as the roughest quarry. They were striving for life amidst their savage foes. A few paces, and they would gain the shelter; but a miss, according to the old saying, is as

good as a mile; and, in spite of the desperate efforts of Gondibert, they were now completely brought to bay. The Jester, at this perilous juncture, seemed to have entirely thrown off his lighter character; and, as the wolves came on him, with his dagger in one hand, and his heavy blade in the other, he dealt his blows like no common warrior. On right, on left, in front he swept the space before him, whilst step by step he retired towards the building. Being on higher ground, he was, for the moment, enabled to keep the animals from outflanking him, and tearing down the affrighted Bertha. But it was evident the unequal contest could not last much longer.

“Keep with me now, Lady,” he said; “move not a pace farther than I myself retire. The whole swarm are now upon us, and will have you down the moment you are beyond reach of my weapons.”

The wolves, now increased to about a dozen in number, each in itself sufficiently powerful to cope with an unarmed man, had indeed almost succeeded in surrounding them, and cutting off their retreat. Already Gondibert

had retired to within half a dozen paces of the ruin, when one of the animals, as he clove its fellow down, sprang upon Bertha, and nearly succeeded in seizing her by the throat. The courage of a Daundelyonne did not desert her in this dreadful emergency. She drew the dagger from her girdle, and smote the animal so truly that she succeeded in beating it down. Another and another, however, followed. Her outer garment was already torn in strips, and she was on the very eve of being pulled to the ground, when a strong arm seized her from behind, and hurling her within the door-way, with a heavy battle-axe smote right and left, clearing the space, and then advanced to the aid of the brave Jester.

It was lucky for Gondibert that he was clad in harness of proof, as the wolves had, at that moment, completely succeeded, spite of his efforts, in closing upon him. Their dreadful fangs were tearing at the links of his chain-mail, as, wearied and outbreathed, his blows grew fainter and fainter. At that moment, however, a voice like a trumpet-call sounded in his ear; and as the heavy blows, delivered

by the arm of a giant, fell around him, he was enabled to gain the shelter of the ruin and rejoin his charge. Another minute, and their rescuer had also joined them; the ruinous door was closed, and they were in safety.

CHAPTER XII.

THE rescue and escape of Bertha Daundelyonne had been so sudden and unexpected that it had appeared to her like one of those changeful events we sometimes remember in a dream. She had well nigh resigned herself to the horrid fate which appeared inevitable, when she was in an instant snatched from the very fangs of the fierce animals surrounding her, and placed in comparative safety. Still, until she was assured of the safety of the faithful Gondibert, she refused to be comforted.

On her first being unceremoniously drawn within the small opening in the walls of the

fortress, and whilst her powerful ally placed his stalwart body between herself and danger, she was received by a second person, who stood within the shadow of the wall on the inside. The excitement and alarm of her situation had hindered her from remarking this person, although he immediately proffered his services to aid her. But on being joined by Gondibert and their preserver, as they hurried across the small space within the walls, in order to gain the interior of the building, she recognised in the person by her side one whose identity she thought she could scarce mistake. A few minutes more, and they had ascended the flight of steps leading through the main entrance, and into the principal apartments of the castle.

The building, we have already said, was a ruin, though the reader is not to imagine it a ruin such as our castellated edifices exhibit at the present time; the ruthless hand of war, and not the ravages of time, having dismantled its outward defences, whilst its interior, although damp and deserted, still afforded a good shelter.

On their preserver conducting the fugitives into the main apartment of the building, the moonbeams streamed from the ruined window. Bertha saw that it was occupied by several armed men, who apparently had sought its shelter during the storm.

The excitement of the scenes she had so recently gone through, added to her previous long imprisonment and its consequent anxiety, proved too much for Bertha, and as she reached the hall of the building she found her strength failing.

She gazed wildly upon the youth who had assisted in guarding her into the apartment, and next at the armed figures at its upper end, and then the whole scene swam before her eyes, and she sank into the arms of Gondibert in a swoon.

At first Gondibert looked around him with some anxiety, and, as his eye fell upon the dark iron-clad occupants of the apartment, he thought it not unlikely that they had fallen amongst a savage horde of banditti. The lonely situation and ruinous state of the build-

ing made such a supposition more than probable, the dark forests of France and Normandy at this period being infested with bands of outlaws and miscreants, whose trade was murder, rapine, and violence. But, as the rays of the moon shone upon the arms and armour of the assemblage, and he beheld the stately forms of the wearer, their crested helms, and the devices upon the shields which hung at their backs, he became in a moment reassured. He found, indeed, that he was in presence of several of those English nobles whose forces had remained up to the present moment loyal to the King.

Meantime, whilst Gondibert, assisted by the youth who had accompanied them into the apartment, was endeavouring to recover Bertha from her swoon, their athletic protector advanced towards the upper end of the room, and addressed those assembled.

“I bring ye, my Lords,” he said, “some fellow-travellers, to share with us the shelter this castle affords. ’Twas somewhat lucky I chanced whilst visiting our steeds below, to

look forth upon the night without the walls, or by this time they had become the prey of wolves.”

“They are welcome,” replied a tall warrior of a commanding presence, who seemed the chief of the assemblage; “be they who or what they may, they are welcome to such shelter as this ruin affords.”

The party, who had apparently been engaged in discussion of some matter of import, when they were interrupted by the entrance of Gondibert and his fair charge, upon seeing a lady in distress, immediately gathered round her.

“Either my eyes deceive me in this uncertain light,” exclaimed the person who had before spoken, “or I behold the daughter of Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne, who has so long been missing from the Court.”

“You are quite right, my Lord of Salisbury,” said Gondibert, who having placed his fair companion in a reclining posture now advanced. “You are quite right, my Lord of Salisbury; ’tis indeed the daughter of your sometime friend and companion in arms; and

how and why she thus re-appears in the midst of this dismal forest, if you will lend me your ears for a brief space, I will expound.

The worthy Gondibert, who had immediately perceived that himself and his charge had fallen amongst friends, now regained his usual flow of spirits, which, indeed, no dangers, however imminent, could entirely depress. He accordingly proceeded to explain to the assembled chieftains the previous abduction of Bertha, her long confinement, and her escape through his instrumentality.

“My Lords,” said Salisbury, addressing himself to his companions, “here is fresh matter, if indeed new matter were wanting, to make us grieve for our dishonourable King. Already branded with infamy, foiled in arms, a proclaimed coward, a betrayer of ourselves and his followers, who fight a losing game for one unable to aid himself, he seeks to reward our labour in his behalf by dishonouring our wives and children, and in the most vile amusements loses the time which might be employed to advantage.”

“Nay, my Lord of Salisbury,” observed

Gondibert ironically, "let us at least give the devil his due. Suffer me to plead for cousin John in this instance. He, as I told you, most opportunely came between this lady and her marriage, and in so far played a virtuous part and did a good action for once in his life. Great men, my Lords, like fiery meteors and comets, are doubtless formed to do good—only their courses occasionally are extremely eccentric."

"Nay," said Salisbury, "I pr'ythee grant us a truce with your truisms, good Gondibert. Said'st thou not but now, that the hateful villain, who is already suspected as an accomplice in Prince Arthur's murder, was the abductor of the lady?"

"I did," replied Gondibert: "the burly hireling with the broad back and the paunch; he whom men call Raoul de Brabant, as evil-minded, ill-tongued, and cowardly a caitiff as ever stepped upon neat's leather; he was the man."

"Then by my knighthood," exclaimed Salisbury, "I swear to smite him with my dagger's point wherever I find the caitiff—even in the King's presence."

"Nay, my Lord," remarked Gondibert,

“you do but threaten a fallen man. Cousin John hath him by this time safe enough in his gripe, and doubtless hath given him suffering penance and complete absolution for all his sins.”

“For mine own part,” said the Earl of Arundel, “I shall fall from one who is alike pusillanimous, imbecile, and cruel. I have struck my last blow for King John in this land. Branded by cowardly murder, foiled in arms, and outwitted as he is in policy, it were vain as well as rash to strive further in his cause. I am for England with all the speed I can make.”

“Nay,” said William d’Albiny, “if that be true which is reported, namely, that John hath really collected a fleet in order to leave us amidst our present difficulties, it were indeed a simple folly to remain here. I too am for England.”

“Could I think it possible, Lords,” observed the constable of Chester, “that Elinor of Brittany hath been seized and sent a close prisoner to England, I also would follow your example and quit the service of one so ruthless. But

I cannot credit the report. I cannot suppose that John, with all his faults, would injure the damsel of Brittany."

"Nay, then," said Gondibert, "you may betake yourself to your castle of Chester as soon as you will, for I, myself, can set your mind at rest on that subject. The fair Breton hath been foully entrapped by the emissaries of my virtuous and courtly cousin John. It was not done so secretly but that my weak *pia mater* made discovery of the whole matter. Our acquaintance, Raoul de Brabant, had his ambitious finger in that pie also. 'Twas he who managed to betray the Princess into the hands of the emissaries sent by John, and she is by this time eating the bitter bread of captivity in the strong castle of Bristol, my masters. God help her in her need."

It was extremely lucky for the fugitives that they had fallen in with a party of the English, who, indeed, had rendezvoused in this ruined fortress in order to discuss their particular griefs and the propriety of retiring altogether from a country and contest in which they no longer seemed to have the support of

the sovereign in whose service they fought. The lords of Salisbury and Pembroke, together with several knights of renown, were here assembled. Their purpose was, first to seek an interview with John, who for some weeks had been playing at hide and seek somewhere on the coast; but, on learning to a certainty from Gondibert that John was on the point of embarkation and merely waiting a fair wind, they resolved, without further circumstance, to provide for their own safety and leave for England without delay. Most of the assembled chieftains were known to Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne who had fled to England some time before, and Lord Salisbury immediately resolved himself to escort his friend's daughter to her own home. Such accommodation as the place afforded was immediately put in requisition, and the invalid being conveyed to a decently habitable chamber for the night, she was consigned to the charge of the youthful person whose appearance had so much surprised her on her first recognising him, and who, indeed, was no other than her old favourite the sometime page of Daundelyonne.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DISAPPOINTED LOVER.

This goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me, than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours.

—— Man delights not me, nor woman neither.

SHAKESPERE.

WHEN the Lord of Folkstone left his faithful attendant and her new-found relative, he rode rapidly for some distance in the direction which had been pointed out to him as that in which the English camp was situated.

Ere many miles had been gained, however, he found he had overrated his powers, and that his strength was not sufficiently restored to enable him to endure the weight of his harness and the fatigue of travelling. The depression of his spirits was equal to the weariness of his limbs.

He felt by no means sure that he had acted either wisely or with gratitude in leaving so abruptly, and, as it seemed to him, for ever, the society of one whose tenderness and beauty had made so great an impression upon him,—one to whom he felt indebted for a life twice saved.

Drawing bridle as the evening advanced, he dismounted beneath the shadow of a tuft of trees, and as he found himself quite unable to proceed, or even to gain the shelter of some neighbouring roof, he threw himself upon the green sward, and leaving his horse to feed upon the herbage around, resolved to pass the night like many another love-sick swain, with only solitude, the dews of heaven, and the murmur of the wind amongst the foliage, to soothe his loving thoughts.

A night's reflection in the bleak air, and under shade of melancholy boughs, by no means afforded relief to his troubled spirit. 'Tis certain that in solitude, and amidst beautiful scenery, the wounded heart more cherishes a secret sorrow, and dwells with more anxiety upon the beloved one,—without whose com-

panionship the world, its sea, its sky, its treasures, and all that it containeth, are as nought—than in gayer and more stirring scenes. The mind of one whom the “blind bow-boy” hath pierced, sinks into a state of morbid melancholy in solitude; and the young Lord of Folkstone accordingly found that he must, if he meant to retain the semblance of a rational being, seek excitement amidst the warfare then raging around.

A spirit like his, so gentle and so amiable when in repose, felt buried under present circumstances. The melancholy of his own thoughts was too oppressive to bear, and he resolved to lose the remembrance of himself and his griefs in the busy hum of the world.

Thus resolved, he hoped to forget the all-absorbing passion which preyed upon his heart. Nay, he strove to aid that endeavour by cherishing the bitter thought of the frailty and utter worthlessness of her he loved.

’Twas all in vain. Amidst the turmoil of the war which then raged in the fields of Normandy and Brittany—in the camp and chambers of the great—in the listed field—at

the feast in the baronial hall, it was all in vain. There was still the

“ One fatal remembrance, one sorrow that throws
Its bleak shade alike o’er his joys and his woes.”

The smile of beauty wooed him in vain. The laugh of folly fell on his ear unheeded, and the sallies of the witty were heard without the smile of appreciation.

The high-born English noble, he of whom all endeavoured to gain the regard, whose matchless form, and high deeds of knightly fame achieved, were the theme of every tongue—he whom none apparently could oppose without defeat, seemed, except when addressed to the encounter in the listed or the battle-field, like some marble effigy of a tomb, his heart as invulnerable as the harness beneath his surcoat.

Turning his thoughts from the present war between the French and English monarchs, he sought the different courts of Europe. In Russia, in Lithuania, in Poland, Prussia, Westphalia, and in Germany, wherever danger was to be found and honour to be gained, his name was to be heard of.

Yet amidst the excitement of such a life, and in the brilliant and joyous scenes in which he mixed, where the softest music floated upon the perfumed air of the brilliant assemblage, nay, whilst a princess sought to win his favour, still would come the remembrance of that night upon the wold, after the field of Mirabeau. That hallowed form never to be forgotten, bent over him in his helpless state, and a pang sharp as the dagger of the assassin, would touch his heart. The voice tuneful as a silver bell was in his ear even in his dreams; that radiant face was anxiously watching over him and caring for his safety; and that battle-field, so accompanied, seemed worth all the brilliant scenes he had since gone through. Wherever he went, although he refused to own it even to himself, he seemed seeking some shadow lost to him for ever. At length he took the palmer's staff and cockled hat, turning his steps from scenes in which he found no interest; and traversing the arid deserts of Palestine, he hung up his arms at the holy sepulchre, and returned like the hunted hare to the spot from whence he had started in the race of life.

Days, weeks, months, and years had passed since the Lord of Folkstone had seen his native woods and towers. His mother slept in the tomb, and a great part of his ample domain had been wrested from him by the strong arms of more powerful neighbours.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HOSTILE FLEET.

A thousand businesses are brief in hand,
And Heaven itself doth frown upon the land.

The Dauphin is preparing hitherward,
Where Heaven, he knows, how we shall answer him.

SHAKESPERE.

WE must now, with the license occasionally granted to novelists, take leave to glide over a small portion of time in our history, and following the footsteps of the English monarch, waft our readers across the Channel, and once more present our *dramatis personæ*, and draw our scene upon English ground ; which, it will be remembered we had left, after the departure of the royal power, as the immortal bard has so well described it:—

“ Guarded with grandsires, babies, and old women,
Either past, or not arrived to, pith and puissance.”

From a chamber in that splendid English

fortress, whose towers are reared upon the dizzy heights of Dover, the anxious eye of the governor of the castle looked out upon the main of waters. They who gaze upon this splendid specimen of a Norman castle in the present time, can form no proper idea, even noble-looking as it yet remains, of its aspect in the reign of John, before those unsightly alterations and additions consequent upon a more modern style of fortification had destroyed its feudal grandeur. On the present occasion, its towers and walls were bristling with the bright arms of those who, day and night, watched from its vantage-ground both sea and land-ward.

The return of John seemed ominous to the land he revisited ; since England, during the period he had been engaged in his foreign wars, might be said to have slumbered in a sort of peaceful security and repose. At the period, however, of his setting foot upon the shores of his native land, it was visited by a dreadful pestilence, which struck dismay into the inhabitants, from one end of the kingdom to the other.

Bad as was this visitation of heaven's wrath,

it was but a slight foretaste of the horrors consequent upon his misrule. It would, indeed, be as difficult to us to picture, as to our readers to conceive, the accumulated misery which everywhere prevailed. Added to the horrors of an intestine war, and its consequent state of disease and famine, the nation was on a sudden deprived of all exterior exercise of religion. The altars were despoiled of their ornaments; the crosses, reliques, and statues of the saints removed and laid prostrate, were hidden from the view of man, as if the very air itself was profaned, and carried pollution in its blast. The bells of the churches, removed from the steeples, were, with everything sacred, covered up and concealed from sight. The monks, shut out from the sinful world, celebrated mass with closed doors; no living person but the clergy being admitted to the holy institution. The very dead were not allowed burial in consecrated ground; but cast into ditches and highways. Marriage was celebrated in the church-yards amongst the tombs. The people were prohibited the use of meat, as in times of

the most rigorous penance ; and were debarred from all rural diversions, pleasures, and entertainments. Nay, they were even forbidden to use towards each other the commonest civilities of life, or even to salute each other when they passed. With beards unshaven, and with countenances of the deepest distress, consequent upon the immediate apprehension of divine vengeance and indignation, men crept about dejected and miserable, as if in search of their “dishonourable graves.”

The kingdom, in short, was under an interdict; and John, in order to oppose his temporal to the spiritual terrors of Rome, immediately confiscated the estates of the clergy, banished many of the prelates, and, placing guards upon the convents, kept the monks in close confinement, scarce allowing them from their own estates sufficient sustenance to support life. Nay, he turned the entire body of the clergy into ridicule ; and, endeavouring to show the licentiousness of their lives, held them up to the contempt and reproach of his distressed subjects.

Upon the heels of this dreadful state of affairs came foreign invasion—

“ Now powers from home and discontents at home,
Meet in one line, and vast confusion meets,
As doth a raven on a sick fallen beast,
The imminent decay of wrested pomp.”

Such was England at the period in which we resume the thread of our story.

As the eye of Hubert de Burgh roamed over the main of waters, he beheld the swelling sails of the invading force, which for many days had been expected. He watched it, as it grew from the smallness of a flight of insects to the appearance of a formidable fleet, and then he was assured it was the Dauphin's power he saw approaching.

Slowly and majestically they sailed on-wards whilst yet in the distance, as the sun glanced upon their gorgeous sails, looking like the graceful movements of a flock of sea-fowl upon the sparkling wave. But as the fleet neared the English coast, and the shadows of evening darkened upon the sea, all that was bright and beautiful became mixed with much that was ominous and terrible; till, like a dark

and threatening cloud, whose discharge would involve all around in ruin, they came heavily and swiftly towards the English coast,

Leaving his chamber, as soon as Hubert made out the fleet of the enemy in the distance, he ascended the turret-stairs which led to the top of the Keep, already crowded with men gazing intently upon that portentous spectacle.

“Oh, inglorious sight!” he said, as he gazed. “Have I lived to behold a foreign power invited hither by the nobles of England, advancing unopposed towards our shores?”

“And yet,” remarked Gondibert, who was standing beside him, and gazing with equal anxiety upon the advancing fleet,—“And yet, Hubert, you will live to see even stranger sights than this ere many weeks have run their course.”

“I care not,” said Hubert, bitterly, “though this sad hour were to be the last of my life.”

“Ah! but thou *dost* care,” returned Gondibert; “such saying is but a figure of speech—a trick of the tongue. Look upon yonder glorious sea, as we behold it from this dizzy

tower—look upon yonder power of dauntless spirits floating upon the sparkling waves—look upon the dark mass of iron men, whose fierce eyes are now bent upon those foemen in their ships—look at this fortress itself, and all that it contains, and all who own thee as their lord, and move at thy bidding as one man, raising the war-shout as thou orderest, and making the air whistle with their shot, or bending the knee in submission, if thou bid them yield—look upon all this, noble Hubert, and with the consciousness of thine own power, wisdom, and courage, to move the springs of the battle, tell me again, whether of the two, would thou play out the game, or leave the glories of such a world? Tush! man, never say the word. Thy heart is in the cause. Thou wouldst grieve to die at this moment; aye, more than when thou first buckled on the brand and backed a courser at fourteen years old.”

“Thou art ever right, Gondibert,” replied Hubert; “I do indeed feel all thou sayest. I would not die—at least, I would fain show my truth and loyalty in the coming strife. Heaven only knows what is yet in store for

this devoted land; but the prospect is dark enough for us all."

"Aye," returned Gondibert; "and they who can spy through the murky air still look upon a confused scene of carnage and carrion death. Heard ye the news abroad this morning? Even the King's nearest friends have now fallen from him since the Dauphin has accepted the invitation of the Barons hitherward. The Earls of Salisbury, Arundel, Warren, Oxford, and the younger Mareschal—all have now utterly deserted his cause. Nay, more; I hear that the King's foreign troops which he levied in Flanders, and other French provinces, have refused to strike a blow in his favour. They decline serving against Lewis, the heir of their monarchy. The Gascons and Poitevins alone of all his mercenaries adhere to him."

"I care not," replied Hubert, "though all the kingdom yield to this paltry Dauphin; though every man, woman, and child throughout the realm bow the knee to the foreigner, and throw up their caps, and proclaim him King of England; yet I alone—alone amidst

the ruins of this keep, will die fighting against the foreign yoke."

"There spoke a true-born Englishman," exclaimed Gondibert, gazing with pleasure at the expressive features of Hubert. "I know thy honesty, my worthy friend, and echo thy words. May the foul fiend light upon these locusts, for the land is altogether devoured by hungry Italian priests, and black-muzzled Frenchman, and greedy knaves from every barren spot of the earth, I think. Ah! and here comes another grasping swarm to feed upon what the others have left. May the sands yonder suck up their ships to the topmast ere they reach our shores!"

The patriot feelings of the Chamberlain and his friend found an answering chord in each heart of that brave garrison.

From tower and turret, and through every loop-hole, embrasure, and arrow-slit of that frowning fortress and its circling walls, they had glared over the dizzy height upon the advancing sails; and as evening approached, and the huge bottoms passed with their gorgeous sails and silken streamers, displaying the

arms of France, and the devices of her various nobles, the whole garrison gave one hearty and simultaneous cheer, which was carried by the winds far out to sea. It was not the cheer of joy, or such shout as is sent forth upon recognition of friends and allies, but it was one of those characteristic shouts of mingled hatred, pleasure, and defiance peculiar to the proud sons of England at sight of the foe and the foreigner almost within reach, and, ere long, destined to be before them "face to face, and bloody point to point."

"I see their intent now," observed Hubert, as he stood somewhat apart, attended by three or four of his principal followers. "They make for the shores of Thanet, where the first part of the expedition is already landed. They will swoop upon Sandwich this night. By Heaven! I will yet throw in a few of my people there, to aid the Cinque-porters in this extremity, or they must yield without a blow, ere Faulconbridge can reach them. Nay, I will myself be in their town this night, to strike a blow."

"By my fay," said Gondibert, "sith it be

so, I will e'en ride me in your company, Hubert; for, an' I can do so, I must reach Daundelyonne ere many hours older."

"Doth the good Knight of Daundelyonne still hold his own, and keep his tower standing amidst this scene of confusion?" inquired Hubert.

"He doth," answered the Jester; "but in a state of marvellous distemperature. And that reminds me I have a hundred businesses on hand."

CHAPTER XV.

REVENGE AND JEALOUSY.

Not in the legions
Of horrid hell, can come a devil more damn'd
In evils, to top Macbeth.

SHAKESPERE.

WE must now again introduce our readers within the towers of Daundelyonne.

The ruthless hand of war, which had again and again swept over the whole coast of Kent, had not spared the dwellings and fortresses scattered over the fertile isle of Thanet, most of which, reduced to the condition of smoking ruins, displayed in their vicinity all the horrors and atrocities recently committed both by native and foreign foes.

The hamlets of Ramsgate, Margate, St. Laurence, Sarr, Birchington, Stouring, and St. Nicholas, were ravaged, burnt, and destroyed; Daundelyonne, and its neighbouring stronghold of Manstone, owing to the obstinate

valour of their owners, alone remaining unsubdued.

Sir Gilbert, who, on his being rescued from an ignominious death by the Outlaw of Poicteau, and subsequently conveyed to one of the secret haunts of the band, had, with his preserver, succeeded in escaping to England; and, arriving at Daundelyonne, had there shut himself up within the protecting circle of his own walls.

Here he had remained in a state of strict seclusion, his gates rammed up against all comers, inwardly chafing under the insult he had received at the hands of the King and his myrmidons.

True to his word, the Earl of Salisbury, on his return to England, had safely conveyed the daughter of his friend to her home, and Sir Gilbert had the satisfaction of receiving his daughter, after all her trials, unscathed. But his mighty spirit panted for revenge against those who had offered him so deadly an affront, both in his own and the person of his child.

Towards the King, his anger was mixed up with so large a share of contempt, that he

despised him too much to care about his ungrateful and unscrupulous conduct. Against the villain Mauluc, and De Brabant, however, he vowed a deep and lasting hatred, and resolved to bring them to a heavy reckoning at the first favourable opportunity.

Acting under this feeling and resolve, after he had seen to the safety of his stronghold, drawn together all the retainers he could muster, and placed his tower in the best possible state of defence, he immediately recrossed the seas to France, and, in expectation of finding Sir Rauol de Brabant in his Chateau of Borslenoir, made for that fortress with all speed.

It was evening when he arrived, like some errant knight, alone and armed in proof, in the vicinity of his enemy's domain; but on seeking the chateau, where his daughter had spent so many dreary hours of captivity, he found only a blackened shell, which plainly hinted the tale of the issue of the night adventure of which we have already described the commencement.

Inquiry seemed to satisfy him that his

enemy was, for the time, removed from his avenging aim; and from one or two peasants, who dwelt in the immediate neighbourhood of the ruin, he learned the details of that eventful night.

Sir Raoul, it appeared, had been captured after the escape of Bertha and Gondibert, and his followers either cut down or dispersed by the King's guard. John had then held a drunken revel with his friend Mauluc, and the troopers he had brought with him, until dawn; and although greatly disappointed and enraged at the flight of Bertha, he had managed to enjoy the bridal feast which the Brabançon had prepared for himself and party.

The next morning, after instituting a search through the immediate neighbourhood of the chateau, the King had ordered it to be fired, and had then taken his departure, carrying the mercenary along with him.

Whether or not the King had really carried out his eccentric designs of marrying the Brabançon to his unfortunate domestic, Sir Gilbert could not ascertain. But he learned that the knight had been treated with sufficient igno-

miny; and being tied with cords back to back with the old dame, and placed in an open tumbril, they had, in that fashion, been conveyed from the burning chateau, and with mock ceremony escorted by the royal guard.

As soon as Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne had become acquainted with these facts, he again turned his horse's head towards the coast, and trusting to the disguise he had assumed, he sought the Court in the hope of still being able to meet with one or other of his foes.

On his arrival at the part of the coast where the King at that moment was waiting for a wind to embark, matters, even yet more strange, a second time interfered with his revenge. It will doubtless be in the remembrance of our readers that, besides his having thwarted the designs of John upon Bertha Daundelyonne by his abduction of that lady, Sir Raoul had also come within the danger of the King's wrath by awakening the jealousy of the monarch in a nearer quarter.

It is easy, therefore, to surmise that one who had aroused so fatal a passion in the breast of the vindictive King would be likely

to feel the effects of its severity. Accordingly, the unlucky knight was now the solitary captive of a deeper dungeon than that which the unhappy Arthur had tenanted.

That this imprisonment was but a short prelude to the grave, the wretched captive could scarce doubt, knowing so well as he did the unforgiving and cruel nature of his late employer; and yet he was never fated to know the real offence for which he was destined to suffer, namely, his supposed intimacy with the fair Isabella of Angoulême.

Indeed, had it not been for this jealous supposition on the part of John, it is not improbable that, by reason of his unscrupulous conscience, and the services he might yet have been called upon to perform, the King would have restored him to favour.

As it was, the deep revenge of John conceived a mode of punishment for the offending knight, which he thought would strike terror into the heart of the lovely Isabella, and scare her from any future indiscretions.

Were it not that the reality even transcends that which we are about to relate, in regard to

this diabolical project, we should hesitate to tell it ; but as truth is said to be stranger than fiction, so did the reality of John's revenge even exceed the version we are about to give.

It was on the night previous to the day in which he secretly embarked and stole away from the shores of France, that John put his diabolical project into execution.

The lovely Isabella, who had been present at the brilliant assembly given by John on the eve of his departure, unaware of his intention of embarking on the following day, had early retired to her apartments in the castle. She was on this evening suffering from illness, and consequent depression of spirits. John had, for the first time, possessed her with his suspicion of her fidelity, and, to her surprise and indignation, mentioned the Brabançon knight as the object of her passion.

This had led to a serious altercation between the royal pair ; and Isabella, giving vent to her indignation at so gross a charge, openly expressed her grief and remorse at having deserted her noble lover, the Count de la Marche,

for so vile a husband as John had proved himself.

The rage of the King upon this rejoinder knew no bounds; and on leaving the Queen in order to vent his feelings upon something within reach, he immediately ordered the Brabançon knight to be strangled in his dungeon. The execution was performed with the strictest secrecy by De Bossu and his assistants, and took place just before the assembly. During the dance, and whilst the softest strain of music floated through the perfumed chambers of the castle, John took an opportunity of whispering in the ear of Isabella the fate of his prisoner.

Isabella immediately retired to her chamber, where she sat brooding over the dismal reflections to which her quarrel with the King, and his unworthy suspicions gave rise. Some sparks of pity for the Brabançon, of whose atrocious character she was unaware, pervaded her breast, and mingled with her grief at her own unhappy lot.

On seeking her couch, the depression of her

spirits amounted almost to indisposition. She had dismissed her attendants for the night, and as she lay, unable to close her eyes, a secret fear and horror of she knew not what, so entirely pervaded her, that she frequently started up in alarm. If, at times, and during the earlier part of the night, she slept at all, it was only by fits and snatches, and as the night-lamp shed its gloomy light through the apartment, her imagination conjured up all sorts of hideous shapes and figures gliding about her couch. At length, unable to bear the intensity of her nervous sufferings, she arose from her couch, and summoned her principal attendant, to try and chase these phantasies from her mind.

“I pray you, good Giselle,” said Isabella, “take your lute, and strike a few chords. My mind is heavy to night. I cannot sleep, or reason myself, with calmness.”

“Your Highness hath allowed the King’s unworthy conduct to weigh upon your spirits,” remarked the confidante. “Trust me, I would not permit even a royal husband so to disturb the equanimity of my mind.”

“Nay, good Giselle,” returned Isabella; “’tis not altogether the base conduct of the King that so much troubles me. There is a secret fear,—an awe and apprehension of something I cannot describe, which haunts my mind this night. The sudden execution of the Knight de Brabant, so undeservedly punished on my account, weighs upon my spirits. There is a feeling of some present horror pervading the very atmosphere of this chamber;—a savour of death in it, which I cannot endure. The very arras and hangings have a funereal look. I pr’ythee, trim the lamp, Giselle, and draw back those sombre curtains from before the window; mine eyes, the whole of this night, have been rivetted upon them, as if some terrible object were there concealed.”

The attendant rose to obey the injunction of her royal mistress; but as she approached the dark curtain of the window she stopped, and turned pale. Could it be possible that the fancies of her royal mistress had affected her own mind, or was it a reality she saw before her? As the breaking dawn was just appear-

ing through the heavy hangings, a bulky form seemed to be suspended behind their folds. To dispel the illusion, if indeed it were one, Giselle rushed to the window, and threw aside the curtain. Oh, horror!

No sooner had she done so, than uttering a piercing shriek, she rushed back to the Queen, and throwing herself upon the couch beside her, fainted. Isabella cast one look towards the dreadful object which met her eyes, and was immediately reduced to the same situation.

Fastened by the neck to the topmost bars of the window, and within the very apartment, hung the body of the Brabançon Knight, a ghastly and grinning memorial of the royal wrath,—John having caused him to be suspended in that situation, that when morning dawned, Isabella might behold, as it were, set in a frame before her eyes, the dead body of her supposed gallant.

It was some time ere the Queen recovered from the shock caused by this hideous sight. Her attendant was the first to regain her scared

senses, when she hurried from the chamber, and caused her royal mistress to be immediately removed to another apartment.

Meanwhile, John, hugging himself in the successful issue of his ghastly joke, sailed on that morning for England, leaving directions for Isabella and the attendants of the Court to follow.

Rumours of the above transaction reached Sir Gilbert immediately on his arrival at the coast ; and the Brabançon being thus beyond his vengeance, he returned to his home, inwardly vowing at a fitting opportunity to seek satisfaction at the hands of Mauluc, for his share in the transaction by which he felt himself aggrieved. As, however, that Knight was now in greater favour than ever with the King, whilst he himself durst not openly appear at Court, Sir Gilbert resolved, amidst the turmoils which now pervaded the kingdom from one end to the other, to bide his time.

Whilst matters had remained in this state with the good Knight of Daundelyonne, the miserable situation of his native land, and the

accumulated horrors around his own immediate domain, preyed upon his spirits and affected his health. Every armed post, and every rumour, since he had returned and shut himself up within the circle of his old faced walls, brought intelligence of a dire and ominous character ; till at length he could have said,—

“ O nation, miserable,
With an untitled tyrant, bloody-sceptred,
When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again ? ”

Not only in Kent, but in every county in England were to be seen the miserable effects of misrule. A horde of barbarous mercenaries, incited by a cruel and enraged prince, were let loose against the estates, tenants, manors, castles, and parks of the nobles of the land ; spreading contention and devastation from one end of the kingdom to the other. Hamlets and castles were alike reduced to ashes, whilst the cries and shrieks of the wretched inmates, under the tortures and atrocities of the enraged and brutal soldiery, filled the air.

Reprisals no less savage and cruel had been committed by the followers of the injured Barons upon those still adhering to the party of the King, whilst John himself, marching through the whole extent of England from Dover to Berwick, had wasted the country on either hand, considering every state, not immediately belonging to himself, the object of military execution.

Of too noble a nature to let his own private wrongs influence him, Sir Gilbert resolved not to join the forces of the discontented Barons. The idea of a foreign Prince ruling in his native land was hateful to him, whilst the conduct of the King made it equally impossible to him to lift a weapon in the royal cause. Under these circumstances he had stood firmly at bay, and had hitherto succeeded in beating off whatever parties had molested him in his retirement.

Still, although hitherto he had managed to hold his own, it was plain to the good Knight that the evil day must come at last, and, as he sat amongst his friends and retainers in his

own halls, whichever way he looked, ruin, disgrace, and misery seemed to stare him in the face. At length the times' abuse, and his own particular griefs, so preyed upon his spirits that the mind of the old Knight became quite unhinged, and he would stalk about all day long without speaking to or noticing those around. It was in vain that the tender solicitude of his daughter sought to dispel the melancholy which weighed upon her father's spirit. It was in vain that his trusty friend Gondibert sought to reason with his griefs, and rouse him to action, explaining the danger of his longer remaining at his home under the present state of affairs.

“The grief that will not speak,
Whispers the o'erfraught heart, and bids it break.”

And as the old Knight turned his eye upon his child, and then gazed vacantly upon his friend, it was plain that, for the present, his reason was unsettled. Noblest minds, 'tis said, sink soonest into ruin, and the monk, who officiated as leech to the castle, prognosticated that Sir

Gilbert would either sink under the pressure of his grief or become insane, unless he could be aroused to action. When, therefore, the Knight had anything like a lucid interval, Gondibert still attempted to get him to lead his retainers forth and quit the shelter of his towers. His object was to persuade him to throw himself and his forces into the Cinqueport of Sandwich, or join Hubert de Burgh at Dover, where Gondibert wisely thought his family would be in greater safety and his people of more use under the threatened invasion, than thus cooped up in his own petty fortress. It was all, however, vain. To the suggestion of Gondibert, he inquired for whom or what he was to fight: one side he said was as bad as the other; either being but a losing game. Let every man stand firmly in his own ramparts. He was enough of a sailor, he said, to know that in a storm the best plan was to abide by the hull, and as to fighting in the cause of the King—that here pudiated. His banner was unfurled on his own Keep,

and he would die amidst the general ruin. No man could trust his brother in such a hurly, and happy he who could stand out whilst the tempest raged over the land.

CHAPTER XVI.

DAUNDELYONNE.

Shall we, upon the footing of our land,
Send fair-play orders, and make compromise,
Insinuation, parley, and base truce
To arms invasive? Shall a beardless boy—
A cocker'd, silken wanton, brave our fields,
And flesh his spirits in a warlike soil,
Mocking the air with colours idly spread,
And find no check? Let us, my liege, to arms.

SHAKESPERE.

ONE evening during this state of affairs at Daundelyonne, as the setting sun gleamed upon the mirrored wave and gilded tower, and turret of the castle, two ladies occupied an apartment whose windows looked out upon the small strip of headland between that fortress and the sea. It would, perhaps, be extremely difficult to our readers to imagine two beings more lovely, and yet so different in their style of beauty, as the two inhabitants of this chamber.

The one reclining upon a rude oaken couch

or settle, which had been placed near the window, that its occupant might enjoy the grateful freshes from the sea, seemed formed for empire and command, so regal was her look.

Like Juliet, she leant her cheek upon her hand, and gazed intently upon the glorious orb as it sank to rest in the wave. The other, no less lovely, but of a smaller and more delicate mould, as she stood beside the open window, sought by her lively conversation to amuse the settled gloom and melancholy which seemed to hang like a dark cloud upon the spirits of her companion. It seemed, indeed, that nothing like care could sit upon the lovely brow of the girl; she appeared born to inhabit some bright world, the creation of a poet's dream.

“ It was a form of life and light,
Which seen, became a part of sight.”

Our readers will perhaps by this time have surmised that we have introduced them into the same apartment, which, in the commencement of our story, we described as occupied by the fair Bertha Daundelyonne, the present occupants being that lady and her sometime page.

Such is the case ; and in the few short years which have flown with swift passage over the events of our story, there was a trifling change in the outward appearance of the pair.

The lady Bertha, who was now about five and twenty years of age, had become a full-blown beauty, whilst the stripling page, whose true sex our readers have long known, now seen for the first time in female attire, and having also reached the prime of womanhood, rivalled her companion in loveliness. As Bertha watched the sun's decline, the soft influence of the hour and scene stole over her, and her thoughts dwelt with increasing sadness upon the change which had taken place in her own prospects and fortunes. That home, which she had left with the hopes and aspirations incident to youth and high station, she had now revisited, apparently to behold it exposed to devastation and ruin. The evening breeze still swept over the grassy down, sweetly as of yore. The setting sun sank majestic in the glassy wave, even as when in happier hours she had looked from that window in all the pride of conscious power and beauty.

The demi-lion still fluttered over tower and keep of the fortress which owned her sire as lord, and which had witnessed all his feudal power. And yet still it seemed to her that all was darkened down to naked waste. The charm of life had fled; and before her was a dreary waste of years.

As her more lively companion marked the settled gloom upon Bertha's spirit, she took her lute, and whilst its tones swept along the thick-ribbed chamber, with a voice whose melody sent a thrill through the hearer's frame, she sang the following ditty:—

He comes no more!
The flowers are blooming,
Their fragrant breath, the bower perfuming,
Even as of yore.
But he who used to gaze enchanted
Upon me, when these flowers were planted—
He comes no more—
No more!

He comes no more;
With voice of power,
Still thrills my lute at evening's hour,
Sweet as before.
Ah me! 'tis now the mournful token
Of plighted faith, for ever broken—
He comes no more—
No more!

The song ceased, and Bertha took the hand of that sweet syren in her own. "And thou, too, thou loveliest, best, but most wayward of companions," she said, "thou, too, must needs conspire against thy poor friend, to put a cheat upon her. Those tones again remind me of happier days,—days dearly cherished, although but as a dream,—when you first sought these walls. But I marvel, Adela," she continued, after a pause, "that thou canst still wear so light a heart, when, like myself, thou wilt perhaps fall a victim to these dreadful times."

"I have too long led a life of danger and adventure, dearest Lady," returned Adela, "to feel so much uneasiness as you doubtless experience. My education has made it easy for me, like the soldier, to cast away care; and, except for the sake of those I love, have little fear. Sorrow, Lady, is a bad-companion, believe me, for those who have little beside their own good spirits to pass them through the world."

"Nay, but I have some cause of complaint against thee," remarked Bertha, "for the

deceit you so long thought proper to practise upon me. I, at least, might have been permitted to learn the secret of your sex somewhat sooner."

"For that, I must ever crave pardon," returned Adela. "But, indeed, the desire of discovering my parentage, and the facility such a disguise gave me, added to the danger to which one so unprotected was exposed must be my excuse. Besides, Gondibert, who had obtained some clue to my history, and under whose watchful eye I had for some time been preserved from harm, insisted upon my keeping my own secret, whilst taking service at Daundelyonne."

"The story of your wandering life," said Bertha, "you have already related to me, but only by parcels, and at intervals, have you told the strange events which made you an alien from your home and friends."

"'Tis briefly told," returned Adela; "and, as I have since learned it from my father's lips, I will relate it to you. I am, like yourself, on one side, of Saxon parentage, and Kent is also the place of my birth. Northward

from the town of Rochester, lies the small domain of Eddington. As its name implies, this place was formerly part of the possession of Adda, a Saxon chief, of considerable importance. ‘Tun,’ I need scarce remind you, meaning a town, or territory inclosed or hedged in with a stone fence; whilst Edda is the name of my paternal ancestor, who fought against Duke William at Hastings. Like Hereward, the chieftain Edda remained a rankling thorn in the Conqueror’s side, after Hastings was won. Indeed, he was one of the few Saxon chieftains who escaped utter degradation and ruin.

“It is almost unnecessary that I should recite to you the persecutions and horrible cruelties so often practised by the Conqueror upon the unhappy Saxons at that period. Suffice it, although from the fierce and unconquerable nature of my father’s tribe, they escaped complete subjection, the fierce Edda had his share of trials. During the frequent hostile expeditions of the Normans into our small territory, their soldiery practised unheard-of cruelties upon such as they subdued.

Many were suspended over slow fires, others were stoned to death; many, again, were starved to death in the dungeons of Rochester Castle; others were thrown into the mud of the Medway, and smothered; whilst the women and children were exposed to a worse fate. I will not, however, pain you by describing half the atrocities practised by the Normans upon our Saxon forefathers; a persecution which, I fear, is scarcely yet ended. Owing to the obstinacy and valour of the brave Edda, the Normans were never able utterly to subdue our tribe; and they retained possession for many years of their territory. In, brief, my grandsire inherited from the old chieftain, Edda, the rancorous hatred he felt towards the oppressors; and, in the seclusion of his stronghold and domain, managed to keep himself and his followers from all intercourse with them. Not so his son Wolstane, my own father. He saw and loved the daughter of Hamo de Crevequeir, a lady so celebrated for her beauty, that she was called 'La Belle des Belles.' They were secretly married, just before the old chieftain's death,

who never knew of the alliance, but died urging his son to hold for ever cherished in his breast, the blackest hatred and animosity against the whole Norman race.

“It would have been well, perhaps, if my father had followed the old Chieftain’s instructions; but, unluckily, his wife’s connexions led him into constant communication with those in power, and he became a friend and follower of the heroic Richard in his early youth. Whilst the lion-hearted King was contemplating his expedition to the Holy Land, my sire and his lovely wife were in attendance on him at Rochester Castle; and in an assemblage of the knightly and noble within those walls, Prince John saw and became deeply enamoured of my mother. It was not, however, till after the departure of Richard for Palestine that the Prince made any effort to get the wife of his brother’s friend into his power; but soon after that event he arranged a hunting expedition in the neighbourhood, and continued to make himself a guest in the Saxon fortress of Eddington.

“It was predicted by many of the grim and

gaunt-looking old followers of my father that the entrance of the reckless Prince and his gay Norman followers within the fort would prove fatal to our house; and many were there that day who would gladly have plunged their weapons into the heart of the Prince as he feasted in that low-roofed hall. The result did not falsify their predictions, since the profligate John could not restrain himself from insulting my mother by his advances, even before the face of his entertainers.

“Stung with the insult, the fierce blood of the Saxon was aroused, and Wolstane expelled the royal profligate and his followers with ignominy from his doors. After the Norman yoke had become firmly fixed upon the country, it was not often that the conquered race durst venture to repel insult and injury, and accordingly my sire and his followers anticipated the direst vengeance of the Prince.

“They were not deceived. Prince John, although he delayed his vengeance for some time, conceived a project by which he hoped to wreak a terrible vengeance. He even sup-

pressed the evil feelings of his heart for three years, at the end of which period Richard departed on the first crusade to Palestine; and immediately after that event had taken place, my father began to feel the effects of the vengeance which, for so long a time, had been smouldering in John's bosom.

“ He accused my father of treasonable practices, and demanded his two children, twins of three years of age, to be given up to him as hostages for the security of his allegiance. My father refused to part with his children, and dreading the result, placed them in concealment with a dear and trusty friend, a Saxon of high descent, but whose family had been nearly extirpated, and himself driven to concealment in the gloomy woods and fastnesses of Offham, once part of the possessions of Offa, King of Mercia. In this seclusion, my parent thought his children would be in safety till he could succeed in leaving the kingdom with them. Such, however, was not to be the case. Nothing could escape the sharp revenge of Prince John, or the vigilance of his emissaries. They managed to ferret

them out even in their seclusion. The nurse to whose charge they had been consigned was bribed, and the children were stolen, leaving no trace by which they could be discovered. Indeed, my father had small opportunity of searching for them, for his possessions were given to a mercenary leader in the Prince's pay, who one night swooped upon our dwelling, and desolated the whole neighbourhood with fire and sword. My mother was taken captive, and delivered into the hands of John; whilst my father, escaping with difficulty, fled to his friend.

“That friend was he whom you have so long known as Gondibert, and the children, I need not say, were myself and brother. Grief for the loss of his sacred charge, added to my father's anger, who charged him with not having strictly guarded them, drove Gondibert nearly distracted. He vowed never again to see his home, or cease the search, till he had recovered the children of his friend. To prosecute this design with the greater license and secrecy, he assumed the disguise of a jester, and in that character roamed half

over the habitable world in his search. For many years, however, his labour was unsuccessful. At length, he thought he had obtained a clue to the existence of one of them, and ultimately traced myself into this neighbourhood, where he rescued me from death within the walls of Salmstone. My brother he also discovered in Normandy, but he has since lost sight of him. My father, meantime, in order to escape death, fled beyond the seas; and with a price set upon his head, and branded as a traitor, became chief of a band of outlaws infesting the woods of Poicteau. Such, Lady, is the sad tale. My own subsequent adventures I have possessed you with."

"And your mother?" inquired Bertha; "though I need scarcely pain you by asking after her fate."

"She died in Ireland," replied Adela, "where John had taken her, and long kept her in captivity. She was, I fear, starved to death in the castle of Limerick."

"It was a sad fate," said Bertha, "but one, I fear, not uncommon in these dreadful times."

“And how, said you, Gondibert succeeded in discovering you?” inquired Bertha.

“He was struck by my resemblance to what he remembered of my mother, and on seeing a private mark which myself and brother both bore upon the right arm, he was confirmed in his suspicions of my identity.”

“And that mark?” inquired Bertha.

“Was placed by my father on parting with the children he thought it likely he might never again behold. In the agony of his grief he marked them with the sign of the cross upon the right arm;” and Adela lifted her sleeve and showed a large crucifix imprinted upon her snowy arm. “He dedicated them to the especial care of Heaven.”

“And Heaven accepted the trust,” said Bertha. “When all mankind seemed your enemy, the protecting hand of Heaven was ready to shield you from harm. And your father, you say, is now with the discontented barons?” asked Bertha.

“He is,” replied Adela. “As soon as he ascertained that I had been placed under your

charge he joined William d'Albiny at Rochester, and seized upon his own domain of Eddington."

Whilst the two ladies thus held converse in Bertha's apartment, the old Knight, with his retainers and friends around him, sat in the hall of the building. Gondibert, who, under existing circumstances, had taken upon himself the direction of the whole household, was at the moment absent, and the little fortress, now completely filled with retainers and men-at-arms, were drawn together by the danger of the times and their love of the chief who had so long held sway over the neighbourhood.

As the old Knight sat on the raised dais at one end of his hall, his eye looked down upon a dark mass of iron men. Many at the lower end of the hall, with their heads upon their folded arms, slumbered upon the oaken board. Others, crowded around the ample hearth, discussed the reports and rumours constantly arriving; whilst others again, excited and uneasy, paced up and down the apartment. Without the hall, too, every part of the build-

ing was traversed and peopled by armed men; many of whom had fled from their ravaged dwellings to Daundelyonne as a place of safety. In the anxious countenances and excited looks of every person in that hall might be read the dreadful expectation to which the state of the nation gave rise; and as the retainers looked upon the vacant countenance of their leader, which, without the lustre of intellect in its feature, appeared but as the effigy of his former self, they felt as the crew of the vessel in the storm whose captain is washed overboard. On that night, as men watched over wood and fell, over down and swamp, from each tower and turret of the building, every sound and sight abroad was noticed and commented upon. Every fire that burnt upon the wold was a signal, and every armed post that approached had its fearful tidings. A dreadful enemy had already set foot, or was hourly expected, upon their shores. Suddenly the rapid sound of horsemen was heard approaching the main entrance, and the flourish of a trumpet was heard without. Every loop-hole of the gate-

house contained its missile ready to be launched upon the new-comers, who were quickly put to their answer.

"From whence, and of what party?" inquired the Warden from above.

"Of the party of all true English hearts," replied the leader. "For England and King John."

"We admit none within the castle," said the Warden. "We hold it for ourselves, against all comers. Draw off, lest we rain a shower of arrows upon your crests."

"I would see the Knight of Daundelyonne," returned the leader of the party, "instantly: without one moment's delay."

"It may not be," returned the Warden, "the Knight is sick; you cannot gain speech of him."

"Nevertheless, if he be in life he will see me," rejoined the other. "My party is but small, and you have nothing to fear in admitting me. Deliver this sealed brief without delay."

The packet was immediately delivered into the Knight's hands. He opened it mechani-

cally, but was there no speculation in his eyes, as he ran over its contents. Bertha, who had descended on hearing the trumpet, took it from him.

“’Tis a full pardon for my father from the King,” she said, “and an order for him instantly to repair with all his forces to Sandwich. The bearer,” continued Bertha, after a moment’s consideration, “is one against whom no gates should be closed, when he comes the messenger of peace. He is welcome, dearly welcome to Daundelyonne. Admit him, Sirs, without delay.”

In a few moments, a knight, accompanied by about half-a-dozen followers, entered the hall. The new comer was a remarkable figure of a man; his proportions were gigantic, and yet, so symmetrically was he formed, that his great height was not at first so apparent. Every muscle of his powerful limbs was developed beneath his chain-harness as if cast in iron. His erect and towering form, and majestic carriage, riveted every eye as he walked through the apartment. The arms he carried were of the most ponderous description: the

shield, itself, which hung at his back, seemed a load under which any common person would have sunk; and his huge two-handed sword, which was also suspended behind, the hilt reaching above the left shoulder and the point touching the spur at his heel, seemed fitted for a giant only to wield. Whilst a whisper of recognition of this magnificent looking form arose amongst the crowd of men in the hall he strode directly up to Sir Gilbert, and looked hard at him for a few moments. He then turned to Bertha, as she stood beside her father, and bowed, but as his eye caught sight of the fair Adela, who stood somewhat in the back-ground, he started, and, immediately advancing, he took her hand and carrying it to his lips sank upon one knee.

The fair Adela smiled, as she returned the recognition, and the Knight, turning, addressed Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne.

“You know me not, Sir Gilbert,” he said; “and, yet, methinks, Faulconbridge should not be altogether forgotten.”

The name seemed to touch some chord which reverberated.

"Faulconbridge!" exclaimed Sir Gilbert, looking up, "who named Faulconbridge? Hath he not also fallen amongst the general ruin?"

"'Tis Faulconbridge himself," urged Bertha.

"Where?" inquired the Knight, gazing vacantly upon the dense crowd of men around, who looked with increasing interest upon the scene.

"Faulconbridge is too noble for such a world as this; what would he at Daundelyonne? He is dead."

"I come to summon thee in the name of John of England," said Faulconbridge; to ask for aid against this inglorious league. We are poor in friends. My power, albeit it is but small, is moving upon Sandwich, and I have ridden forward to request you to join me with all speed. The Dauphin is already on the seas, or perhaps by this time landed."

"Oh, the Dauphin!" muttered Sir Gilbert; "Is it so? But, 'tis no matter. I draw no sword in the cause of John. He is an object of the blackest hatred to mankind."

"I may not listen to this," said Faulconbridge. "Thou wilt not tamely sit with thy

followers around thee, Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne, and suffer a beardless Frenchman to invade the shores of your island. Thou wilt not remain in this petty fortress 'till this scum of France swarm upon your hold, give your towers to the flames, and your people to the edge of the sword. Fie upon thee, Sir Knight! Let your trumpet sound out and lead these brave fellows against the foe. Lady," he continued, turning to Bertha, "we must either persuade your father to leave this place, or forcibly remove him."

The old Knight seemed to consider the words of the son of Cœur-de-lion. He was aroused, and appeared to awaken, as from a deep sleep. Starting to his feet, he placed both hands upon the brawny shoulders of Faulconbridge, perusing his features intently for some moments, as he held him at arm's length.

"How say you?" he said, after a pause. "Have the French indeed landed upon the shores of Kent?"

"Such is, I fear, by this time the case," returned Faulconbridge. "For as I journeyed hitherward, I was met by twenty tired posts between this place and Rochester, urging me

on with all speed. Nay, the Dauphin's fleet hath been already seen upon the seas."

"And do you then really advise our removing hence?" inquired Bertha.

"I do," returned Faulconbridge; "to remain cooped up here were little less than madness. King John indeed requires the aid of all true Englishmen at this juncture; and whilst my powers, spent with forced marches, lies at Canterbury, I have galloped hither."

The words of the gallant Faulconbridge recalled the Knight of Daundelyonne still more to himself, and his eye kindled as he gazed upon him.

"And doth King John," he asked, "solicit aid from me? From me, whom he hath loaded with ignominy in return for true duty and loyalty?"

"I may not gainsay you," replied Faulconbridge. "Sir Walter de Mauluc was ordered to bring this dispatch to you whilst on his way to raise men in Kent. But he declined the office, and I am myself the bearer."

The name of Mauluc still further moved the old Knight.

“Sir Walter de Mauluc did well to avoid my poor house,” he remarked; “for I swear to thee that not even his office as messenger of King John should have saved the felon Knight from feeling the lion’s teeth in his throat. I would have hung him out from the battlements here for a warning to all dishonest knaves. And so then,” continued the old Knight, after a pause of some moments, “so then John requires the aid of my people here, and hath sent forward an order for me to repair to Sandwich. He shall have my aid, in so far, that I will help to resist the landing of the foreigner upon my native shores. But how must that King have fallen, Sir Richard, when he asks the assistance of one whom he hath not only sought to dishonour in his only child, but had even given over to an ignominious death?”

Faulconbridge bit his lip, for the truth of the old Knight’s words was not to be gainsaid. Sir Gilbert saw the effect of his words, and struck his palm into the gauntleted hand of the son of Cœur-de-lion.

“Come, Sir Richard,” he said, “methinks,

'tis something in your King's favour, that you yourself still adhere to him. I will accompany you, with my people. 'Tis, as you say, useless to remain within these walls. We look our last, this night, upon Daundelyonne."

The old Knight seemed now to have recovered great part of his energies. Whilst Faulconbridge and his party obtained a hasty refreshment, his clarions sounded to horse, and the entire force within the walls were mustered in the ample court-yard. The cavalry, with himself and Faulconbridge, were destined to effect a dash across the flats, ere the tide rose. The infantry were directed to make a hasty march towards Sarr and Sturry, and join the King's forces, as they advanced from Canterbury. The Lady Bertha and Adela, mounted upon their palfreys, rode in the midst of the former party.

In those days of peril and strife, the transition from the comforts of home to the saddle and the open road, was too common to cause much difficulty or delay in the way of preparation. Ladies of the highest rank passed the greater part of their lives amidst the pride and

circumstance of the camp and the march. Their safety was, amidst the armed forces of their nearest and dearest friends; the very ornaments they wore were the heraldic devices which decked the arms and armour of their lovers and husbands. Even their sports and pastimes were held amongst all the bustle of the big war.

By this hasty movement, Faulconbridge thought at any rate to throw their small force into Sandwich, before the French landed. At the very moment, however, that Sir Gilbert gave his banner to the wind, and galloped with his party from beneath his towers, the Dauphin was assailing the walls of that Cinque-port.

The pale moon poured a broad clear flood of brilliant light upon the Castle of Daundelyonne, as the forces filed out into the open space in front of the Barbican. They moved forwards through the dark belt of stunted oaks which grew about a couple of bow-shots from the fortress, and then were lost in the light white vapour which exhaled in the marshy grounds towards the flats, and deep silence, occasionally broken by the sighing of the night wind, reigned

around the towers of the deserted Daundelyonne. At times, however, an acute and attentive ear might have distinguished, gradually dying away in the distance, the heaving sound of a large body of horse,—now sounding hollow upon the turf, and then again beating sharp and rapid upon the hard road.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PASSAGE OF THE FLATS.

Half my power, this night,
Passing the flats, were taken by the tide.

SHAKESPERE.

MEANTIME, after leaving Daundelyonne, Sir Gilbert and his party dashed over the open down, and descending the rising ground, entered the skirts of the wood, which lay to the left of Minster; and passing through it, the flats were immediately before them. A single glance sufficed to show that not a moment was to be lost. The waters of the Genlade and Wantsum, at that period flowed sometimes entirely round the isle of Thanet, separating it from the main land of Kent, so that even fleets could sail across the broad estuary. At the present moment, as they looked across the low grounds, consisting of some four or five miles of marsh land, ere they could reach the

town of Sandwich, they beheld the yesty waves of the salt tide foaming and leaping in the clear moon-light, within a few yards of the causeway they were to traverse. In a short time the floods would be out, and certain destruction awaited those who were taken in the tide.

The party halted in doubt for a few moments ere they descended the higher grounds.

“Who knows anything of these washes?” inquired Faulconbridge; “may we pass over yonder space ere they engulf us?”

Sir Gilbert shook his head doubtfully; “There is great danger in the attempt,” he said; “I never but once passed over when the waters were so high, and then I nearly perished.”

As the party stood upon the edge of the hill, amidst the ripple of the dancing waves, which was plainly to be heard in the silence of the still night, a rushing sound was also to be distinguished, mingled with the roar of voices from afar, and then a broad red flame shot up through the mists.

Faulconbridge marked the sound. “The

town is assailed," he said; "we must try the flats. 'Tis our only chance of reaching Sandwich this night. At any rate there is now no time for deliberation. Every moment lost is of consequence."

Whilst he spoke his eye rested uneasily upon the fair Adela, who with Bertha sat beside Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne, somewhat in front of the party; and the bitter thought intruded that he had suffered his private feelings to interfere with his duty. Was it really his friendship for the Knight which had led him out of the straight path that night, or was it a softer feeling towards that bright form which, like some goddess of the chase so gracefully occupied her saddle before him? Whilst he gazed upon Adela, the din of battle was again borne upon the blast. The exciting sounds recalled him to himself.

"I cannot advise you, Sir Gilbert," he hastily said, "to expose these ladies to the perils of yonder passage; but for myself, I must keep promise with yonder town, or perish in the waters."

So saying, Faulconbridge dashed the spurs

into his charger, and followed by his party galloped like lightning down the hill side.

“The banner of the Daundelyonne, when once unfurled, turns not for flood or fire,” cried Sir Gilbert. “Forwards, gentlemen; we shall yet be in time to share in yonder fight.”

To the majority of our readers the wild scenery of this part of Thanet is probably well known. Far away to the right, over the oozy reeky waste, on a small promontory, stands the ancient monastery and castle of Reculver, —the Regulbrum of the Romans,—and subsequently called Raculf-Cester by the Saxons; where in earlier times lay the first cohort of the Vetasians, under command of the Count of the Saxon shore. Somewhat nearer to Sandwich, and on a rising ground, are to be seen the massive walls of Richborough, the spot on which Cæsar landed his legions when he first invaded Britain; whilst on the left, far as the eye can reach, the wild waters of the open sea come dancing up to the very edge of the road the traveller passes.

During the rapid ride of the party, and ere they had halted upon the rising ground, as we

have described, Adela had been conscious of the careful attention of one of the cavaliers, who had accompanied Faulconbridge to Daundelyonne. He had placed himself beside her from the commencement of the start, and, like a careful esquire, rode close at her bridle-rein. When Faulconbridge dashed down the hill-side, during the short interval which elapsed ere Sir Gilbert's party followed, this cavalier, instead of accompanying his own party, had still lingered beside her. And now again, when they gained the flats, he was close to her horse's head.

A perfect horsewoman, inured to the saddle almost from her cradle, during her adventurous life, Adela on ordinary occasions would hardly have needed the assistance of so attentive an esquire. But during a hurried night ride in the midst of a troop of some two hundred heavily-armed horsemen, thundering helter-skelter over the uneven ground, such attention was by no means unwelcome. The slightest falter in her charger might make that fair form "pavement for the abject rear." The rapidity with which the tide rose over the low

grounds was immediately apparent to the party; for even during the short time spent in galloping down the declivity, the water had already accumulated over the road, and the hoofs of the horses dashed it aside as they galloped furiously onwards, and ere a mile had been gained it had risen above their fetlocks.

The great danger now consisted in losing the beaten track; any deviation on either hand would cause the heavily-armed horses to sink for ever in the swampy ground. Faulconbridge suddenly became aware of this fact. Before him was a white driving mist which he could not see through, and which completely surrounded his party. He therefore slackened the pace of his gigantic steed in order to allow Sir Gilbert to come up.

“I am amazed,” he said, “amongst these waters. What with the mists of these infernal fens on one side, and the roaring sea on the other, methinks the fiend himself could never find sure footing on such a highway.”

The situation was now indeed sufficiently perilous. On the right, the sea came rolling

on in high foaming waves, gradually extending and surging in eddies amongst the standing waters of the flats on the other side. The party seemed already hopelessly engulfed in the main of waters, which now flew and gamboled in white frothy flakes up to their very horse-girths.

"Halt not now," said Sir Gilbert, as he came up. "To return is impossible; our only hope consists in getting through the lower part of the road before us. Advance your party in single files, Sir Richard, and let me pass to the front.

"There is a sharp turn here," he continued, to Faulconbridge, as he passed to the right. "I know it by the cross you see just before us."

As he spoke, Sir Gilbert passed rapidly to the front, with the rein of his daughter's palfrey in his grasp. The cavalier who led the steed of Adela immediately followed them, and the whole party safely passed the wooden cross which marked the spot at which the road diverged.

"There is yet another turn," said the Cavalier, who rode beside Adela, "and then we

gain the deepest part of the road. If that spot is yet passable, we may hope to gain the higher ground beyond and escape the waters; but I almost fear we shall be too late."

Whilst her guide was speaking, the tone of his voice struck upon the ear of Adela, and she gazed intently at his tall form. As she did so, she saw him take the dudgeon-dagger from his belt, and, without slackening his pace, he stooped in his saddle and cut through one of the fastenings which held the heavy breast-plate of his steed, and it fell to one side. Another effort cut through the fellow-strap, and the chest of the steed was instantly divested of the ponderous defence. He then, like some varlet of the circle in a modern exhibition of horsemanship, piece by piece ridded both himself and steed of as much of their heavy harness and accoutrements as he could readily get off; and throwing away the apathy in which he had hitherto seemed wrapped, he addressed himself to the exigencies of the situation.

Owing to the caution with which they were obliged to proceed, the whole party had now

slackened their pace to a slow trot, each man pushing on as he best might.

"The turning is close at hand," said the Cavalier to Faulconbridge. "If Sir Gilbert misses it, he will be swallowed up in the morass in an instant."

"How are we to distinguish it?" inquired Faulconbridge. "The mists roll past us so fast, I can scarce see ten yards to the front."

"'Tis a black crucifix," returned the Cavalier, "placed here by the monks of Minster as a guidepost, and must be on yonder side of the road."

"I see it now," said Faulconbridge; "but those in rear will never hit the exact place to turn."

The stranger answered not, but rising in his stirrups, dashed the end of his lance into the ground, leaving its fluttering banderole as a guide to their followers.

Adela glanced at it as he did so, and immediately saw the cognizance of the Folkstones displayed upon the silken streamer. She no longer doubted who was the careful attendant by her side. The next moment they entered

the deeper waters where the road descended, and the waves flowed over the cantle of their saddles.

The gallant Faulconbridge had reined up his steed close beside the lance, which his companion had left standing as a guide, and remained by it till every horseman had passed and taken the proper turn, before he himself followed.

The whole party were now at the most imminent point of their journey. Their pace was necessarily reduced to a walk ; and woe to the unlucky horseman who deviated from the sands of the causeway. Next to the roaring waters, the heavy armour of themselves and steeds were their worst enemies ; and those who missed footing, rolled over in an instant never to rise again. They looked as they struggled onwards, like Pharaoh's host amidst the waves of the Red Sea.

Struck with the horrors of such a situation, many would have turned and attempted to go back, but Faulconbridge, who kept in rear endeavouring to urge the stragglers, forbade the vain effort. His voice was heard amidst

the roar of increasing waters, vowing he would transfix with his lance whoever attempted to deviate from the line of march.

'Twas a singularly awful sight—that passage of the flats; the shoulders and helmets of the riders were all that were visible above the waves, whilst the snorting horses, their heads armed with iron frontlets, alone appearing, as the moon shone upon them, seemed like so many ghastly monsters of the deep struggling forwards. As Faulconbridge looked before him, he became aware that the party was diminishing; and the line becoming broken, and as horse after horse suddenly lost footing and with its rider disappeared, the very casualties immediately in his front warned him of the points to be avoided. High upon his magnificent charger, “barded from counter to tail,” he well knew his dangerous situation.

“I am not much given to be holy,” he said, and he dashed the spurs into his horse’s sides and made him flounder on the right track, as he beheld the man before him disappear. “I am not given to be holy, but by the bones of my Sire, so it please the Virgin, to allow of

my being knocked on the head upon dry land rather than smothered in these morasses, I vow to found a chapel in yonder town, and maintain a priest to recite prayers for me every hour in the day."

Diminished to one-half their number, the party steadily held on. Sir Gilbert, who knew every point and bearing of the track, and whose eye marked every rise in the ground on either hand still uncovered by the waves, kept in front, leading his daughter's horse, and those immediately behind now began to find they had passed the deepest part of the road.

The many casualties, however, which during the last few moments had taken place, had so much broken the line, that, in the thick mist, those in rear were separated and lost the benefit of his guidance. Adela, still carefully escorted by her devoted guide was now amidst those left behind. Her guide, however, appeared to know precisely their exact position, and kept steadily on. Those in rear were now in the deepest part of the passage, and Faulconbridge at this moment came up beside them.

“By our Lady’s grace,” he said, “but I find myself almost left alone to struggle out of this unlucky scrape.”

“A few minutes more,” said the Cavalier, “and our efforts will be crowned with success; we shall gain the ascent in the road. Your horse,” he continued, “is high in the waters, Sir Richard; push on, and should we fail, keep his head pointed straight upon yonder glare of light from the town. We have now shingles under our feet.”

At this moment a huge wave came rolling on. It ascended to the chin of Faulconbridge, and almost threw his heavily-armed steed off its balance. With spurs and rein, however, he managed to recover him, and, as the waves slowly receded, he dashed forward and gained the higher ground. As he did so, he turned his head to look for Adela and her guide. The white mists still drove over the rolling waters, but not a living being was to be seen, and, as another large wave followed, he turned to endeavour to save himself. A few more plunges and Faulconbridge was safe beside Sir Gilbert and all that remained of the

party. To the noise of many waters now succeeded the roar of strife. They had gained that part of the road which passes the town of Stonar; before them were the walls of Sandwich, and between themselves and those walls was a portion of a hostile army.

Out of upwards of two hundred horsemen who had made the attempt, not more than fifty had passed those fatal flats. These were speedily formed, and without a moment's delay they dashed for the gates of Sandwich. A glance, as they neared it, showed the situation of the devoted Cinque port. Great part of it on the further side, was on fire, which, blazing in awful majesty, displayed the walls filled with the brave defenders, still struggling fiercely hand to hand and foot to foot with the myriads of assailants who were pouring upon them, whilst a terrific din and roar of many voices filled the air. The portion of the French who occupied the road in front of the drawbridge which admits from the Isle of Thanet, and who were by no means in expectation of an enemy apparently risen from the waves of the sea, were completely taken by

surprise; and the party, with Faulconbridge and Sir Gilbert at their head, their lances lowered, and Bertha in the midst, passed through them like a thunderbolt. Faulconbridge and half a dozen of his followers then turned, and cutting right and left, whilst Sir Gilbert summoned the town, the drawbridge was lowered, the gates opened, and with a shout of welcome they were quickly admitted.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SACK OF SANDWICH.

Look to see

The blind and bloody soldier, with foul hand,
Defile the locks of your shrill-shrieking daughters ;
Your fathers taken by the silver beards,
And their most reverend heads dash'd to the walls.
What rein can hold licentious wickedness,
When down the hill he holds his fierce career?

SHAKESPERE.

THE anticipations of Hubert were correct. The Dauphin's fleet, consisting of six hundred and eighty sail, landed their warlike freightage at Stonar; and the entire island of Thanet, and the coast immediately neighbouring it, was instantly in one blaze of contention and strife. Like the small portion first ignited by a spark of fire alighting upon some highly-combustible matter, the fierce flame preyed upon all within its reach ere it spread over the entire surface.

Landing unopposed at Stonar—already in his interests—the Dauphin instantly marched over the small space intervening, and poured his numerous troops headlong upon the girded and ramparted town of Sandwich.

True to their allegiance, the Cinque-port functionaries of the latter town had kept their gates closed against the confederates, and under promise from Faulconbridge, who was known to be advancing with rapid marches, endeavoured to beat off the numerous foes by which they were surrounded. The gallant Hubert had better enabled the Sandwich men to hold their own by dispatching to their aid all the forces he could spare from Dover; and on the rumour of the intended landing on that part of the coast being confirmed, had himself hastened from Dover to give them the benefit of his personal advice and assistance.

It was night when the Dauphin approached this Cinque-port, and as his legions neared the walls, not a sound was to be heard from the thousands of fierce watchers who lay in readiness in every foot of their circumference.

It was like the lull before the storm which

is to tear, rend, and ruin all within its reach. Suddenly, a rushing noise was to be distinguished in the direction of Stonar. It increased every moment, till the measured tread of multitudes was plainly to be heard, together with the ringing sound of armour.

The ominous rush was suddenly stilled. It commenced again, and seemed to divide in different directions. A dark mass was then seen, and again all was hushed as death. This is a fearful moment to those who are in expectation of the coming horrors of the night.

“ Between the acting of a dreadful thing,
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream.”

The suspense, however, is short. The stifled noise again approaches. It advances swiftly; and now shadowy figures are perceptible, bearing ladders, machines, and engines of assault.

Still, the dark ramparts appear devoid of life, and the town remains noiseless as the grave, whilst the approaching mass threatened every side like a rolling cloud.

As the fierce watchers lie and mark every movement of this fearful cloud, it suddenly

assumes the appearance of an immense body of living men, who quicken their pace to a run, and throwing down the machines they had carried, dash at the town.

Immediately a dreadful shout arises from the walls, accompanied by the whistle of thousands of arrows, huge stones, cross-bow bolts, and other missiles, followed by shrieks and groans of agony. The garrison now springing up in every direction to receive their foes, the entire circumference of the ramparts is one gleam of hostile blades; which, raining with dreadful energy on every side, create a din as if ten thousand smiths were at work at the same moment.

Then might have been heard, within the walls, the wail of scared females, and the cry of children; the hurried shout of messenger and man-at-arms, and the rush of men from place to place, as different posts required assistance.

As the contest continues, the half-emptied streets become re-peopled by men staggering wounded from the ramparts, who throw themselves down to die amongst women huddled

together in dreadful expectation of the horrors to come.

Meanwhile, the forces of the Dauphin made their fiercest attack on the south side of the town, which looks towards Walmer. On this side they formed, mass after mass, as the garrison succeeded in repelling their assault.

Again and again the assailants crossed the ditch, swarmed up the slope, and gained the walls; and as often were they beaten off by the defenders, and hurled bleeding and mutilated into the ditch below.

“Holy Saint Augustine of Canterbury,” said the burly Cinque-port Mayor, as he drew back for a moment after having beaten off a couple of assailants, and sent them headlong down the slope. “Holy St. Augustine of Canterbury! but how thickly these French vermin swarm to-night. Four times have we swept them from our walls, and they come thicker and thicker every fresh assault.”

“Would to God that Faulconbridge were come!” exclaimed Hubert, who at that moment came up, covered with dust and blood, his ponderous sword broken short off at the hilt.

"Send off men to the Fisher's-Gate, Sir Mayor; 'tis hard pressed."

"Do the cravens cry out for help there?" inquired the Mayor, "when every part of my town is polluted alike by these beggarly Frenchmen."

"The walls on that side are low," replied Hubert, "and the enemy hath crossed the river in force. Our men have fallen like corn before the reaper."

"Our Lady be praised," said the Mayor, "we have beaten the frogs off our ramparts for a space, but I expect they will burst on us like a torrent again in a few moments."

The assailants, who had hardly expected so rough a reception, had indeed retired for a time, and sent to the Dauphin for a larger force. The Dauphin, who had not himself been personally in the assault, was considerably annoyed at the repulse of his forces in their first attack. He had expected to win the town almost without stroke or wound. But he found in this first check the native obsti-

nacy of the English on their own ground, many of his knights and officers being amongst the slain.

He immediately resolved to accompany the next attack, and ordering up some of his engines on the Thanet side of the town, for want of stones and other missiles commenced throwing the dead carcases of numerous horses which had been slain into the town; whilst with fresh troops he precipitated himself upon the walls on the other side.

The besieged, who fought like tigers at bay, on every inch of their ramparts, were now hardly able to stand against the continual rush of their assailants, who seemed to pour on them like the waves of the sea. No sooner was one attack repulsed, with dreadful loss, than more and more swarmed to the walls. Whilst some carried hurdles, and large shields before them, others plied their cross-bows vigorously, in order to distract the besieged on their ramparts. Fascines and ladders were brought, to force a better passage over the ditch. Still the devoted inhabitants

fought with desperation, overturning the ladders, burning the fascines, and hurling their enemies headlong from the walls.

At length, the Dauphin, enraged beyond measure, despatched messengers to his ships for some artificial fireworks, which Philip Augustus had brought with him on his return to France, from Acre ; and which he ordered to be thrown by a machine, into the town. The effect of this fire, which had been used by the Turks against the French crusaders, was dreadful. It had been described by the Crusaders as rushing through the air like a fiery dragon, giving such a light, that the whole army might see, as if in open day. Such, indeed, was the terror it had occasioned in the East, that Gautier de Criol, one of the French commanders, used to advise the army, when it was thrown, to prostrate themselves on the earth, and call for aid from God, who alone could protect them.

This dreadful combustible, which indeed was the Greek fire, with a “pernicious stench and livid flame,” carried dismay into the hearts of the besieged. Wherever it struck them, it

penetrated between the joints of their armour, and burning their bodies, put them to dreadful agony; so that, like raging madmen, they precipitated themselves headlong into the moat, or threw themselves down, and died, writhing in torments, on the walls.

In vain the Kentish archers drew their bowstrings to their ears, and rained such flights of arrows, that the French bowed their heads to the shower. The enemy succeeded in setting fire to the Benedictine Monastery, and the Hospital of St. John, from whence the flames quickly extended to the other edifices in the town.

Still the defenders fought their ground, inch by inch. They were not to be subdued by any foe but death; for well did they know that they fought for all—for home and hearth, wife and child, did every husband and father stand his ground.

The burly Mayor was on that side of the town which the Dauphin himself assailed. He saw that all was lost there; and whilst Hubert held the torrent in check for a brief space, he retired, and sending all the reinforce-

ment he could spare, to check the rush, he drew ship-cables, chains, and even huge bars of iron across the streets. By this means, he still preserved half his town, and effectually checking the enemy, kept them among the burning houses.

This was a state of things which could not last. The defenders, choked up in their streets, were like the scorpion, "girt by fire;" and the direst confusion succeeded to the order with which they had hitherto fought. Foot by foot, and house by house, the assailants were obliged to gain their way, whilst the Dauphin himself, who had ordered part of the walls to be beaten down, attended by a large body of knights, and following the progress of his troops, made his way into the fish market.

The portion of the town in possession of the enemy was now on fire in several different places, and still the enemy kept pouring in as if determined to sweep everything before them, and bursting the barriers which had been drawn across the streets, gained ground in every part. At this moment, Faulconbridge arrived, and with Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne, and their fol-

lowers, for a time arrested the progress of the enemy.

The moment the gallant son of Cœur-de-lion got inside the gates, he saw that matters were nearly at the last gasp. The streets and houses, crowded and choked up with the o'er-wearied defenders, were illuminated by the glare of the fires in the other end of the town, and presented a dreadful scene of strife, ruin, and horror.

His appearance, however, although so thinly attended, was hailed with shouts of joy; and the name of Faulconbridge alone seemed worth a thousand men.

Waving his ponderous weapon on high, and calling to his followers, he made his way through the crowd, and, charging the assailants, in the narrow street leading to the fish-market, bore everything before him; creating such a panic by the suddenness of his appearance, that the French turned, and, where they were not ridden over, trampled each other to death.

The Dauphin, who, in person, was a pale, thin, mild-looking youth, gallantly accoutred

in a surcoat of blue silk, emblazoned with silver,—his horse-trappings equally gorgeous, and sweeping the ground,—was. at this moment, sitting listlessly in his saddle, and surrounded by his Knights, in a lisping, affected drawl, was issuing out orders that no quarter should be given. He was greatly angered at the obstinacy of the Sandwich folks, who took so large a share of beating, and yet still refused to be beaten.

“*Mon Dieu!*” he said, “but those Cinque-port dogs are as ugly as their town. We break our teeth upon them, but cannot bite them through. Bring me no more reports, *Messieurs*; but burn them utterly out, and give their Cinque-port to the flames. Ah! bah! *Brulez, tuez, detruiez!* *Mort de ma vie!*” he continued, “*nous ferions de bonnes affaires. Venez-ici, être le jouet, de la canaille de ce maudit Cinque-porte. No quarter, Messieurs! No quarter! They shall perish pour l’outrage.*”

Whilst the Prince sat in the fish market, issuing out his orders amidst the blazing confusion, Faulconbridge was carrying ruin in his

desperate career, and, like some Paladin of romance, alone almost turning the tide of battle. By some means, he gained a hint of the Dauphin's whereabouts, and nearly put an end to the Prince, and his aspirations after the English crown, at a blow.

Driving his headlong charger through every obstacle, he cut a passage amongst the crowd of French cavaliers, and, beating them right and left from their horses, alone, amidst the fruitless storm of blows that rained upon him, nearly reached Lewis, where he sat.

His blows, sounding above the din of the crashing tumult, and the shouts of the combatants in the neighbouring streets, dismayed the French nobles, who, however, pressed closer round their Prince.

The Dauphin, who found himself suddenly nearly face to face with so terrific an opponent, displayed no alacrity to engage him, but reined back his steed, and shrank from the terror of his arm; and Faulconbridge would have succeeded in striking him from his horse, had not an English youth, who was somewhat in rear, when all bore back, spurred to the

front, and received the shock of the encounter. The gallantry of this cavalier saved Lewis, and enabled those around to recover from the surprise; and Faulconbridge, beaten off, and hemmed in by numbers, was on the point of being himself captured or killed.

At this moment, however, Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne, who had placed his daughter in the strong dwelling-house of the Mayor, galloped to his aid, and, accompanied by about a dozen knights, rescued the brave Faulconbridge, and enabled him to retire. The Prince at the same time turning his steed, together with his retinue, retired to the walls.

This was almost the last expiring effort of the defenders to preserve the good old Cinqueport. They were fairly overborne and beaten, and the legions of the Dauphin pouring in on all sides, the game was won.

Then ensued a scene, such as we have neither the power nor the inclination fully to describe.

The valiant Cinque-porters everywhere died as they stood; beaten down like bullocks in the shambles, or burnt out in their dwellings.

There was no flying, no yielding, no quarter, given or taken. Amidst their blazing rafters, they fought it out to the last within their walls. Many of the besiegers, falling victims to the fierce rage with which they satiated their love of blood, shared the fate of the conquered, amidst the general ruin. Dreadful was the license at this period granted and taken by the foreign invaders, when they became victors. Then, indeed, did

“The fleshed soldier roam, with conscience wide as hell.”

Then indeed did man partake of the nature of an incarnate fiend,—

“Condemned to tyrannize,
On unreprievable condemned blood.”

In every part of the town sights and scenes of horror, and butchery ensued, sufficient to condemn mankind to utter destruction.

The sanctuaries of the churches, where women and children had prostrated themselves, were no longer held sacred. The pavements of monasteries, chapels, and chantries were slippery with gore. The subterranean vaults of

the dead into which fugitives had crept, were torn open, and became scenes of terror and atrocity; till at length the blazing town falling alike upon victor and vanquished put an end to the horrors of the night,—

“And darkness was the burier of the dead.”

At the commencement of this scene of butchery, and after he had been rescued by Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne, the noble Faulconbridge galloping, like the avenger of the unhappy citizens, through the burning streets, endeavoured to cut a passage out of the town.

His ardour had again parted him from his party, who now had retired to the mayor's house, a strong moated building situated on the banks of the river, near the Canterbury gate.

Involved in the narrow streets, and alone amidst the blazing ruins of the part of the town he had reached, the gallant son of Cœur-de-lion seemed on the eve of falling a sacrifice to his rashness, when he beheld a horseman spurring towards him. He was about to

assail him, when in the glare he saw it was Hubert de Burgh.

“Fly, noble Faulconbridge!” exclaimed Hubert; “Fly, all is lost here. Haste from this scene of ruin.”

“Now, by Heaven, Hubert,” said Faulconbridge, as he turned his steed, “I am the more ready to obey your injunction, since I am well nigh choked here with the filthy odour of burning timbers. But we can scarce leave the Knight of Daundelyonne to perish amidst the flame. I have sought him in every part of the town without success.”

“The Knight of Daundelyonne, like others to-night, must shift for himself,” returned Hubert. “He hath, most likely, if still alive, made good his retreat. On, Sir Richard, for Heaven’s sake, on! Make for the Canterbury gate, and put on towards Dover without delay.”

Thundering on, the pair dashed through the street, and cutting down all opposed to them, reached the gate.

Luckily, the gate-house on this side the town was still in possession of a remnant of the

town's-folk, who had shut themselves up there, and were fighting it out to the last man. The two knights, therefore, spurring through the press, and riding down all immediately in their way, passed through the arch, and gained the open road.

The Mayor's house was the last place of strength that held out. Thither the chief magistrate, together with Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne and other fugitives had retired, and for some time succeeded in keeping their savage foes at bay.

At length this last resource was forced, and the defenders being pursued through every part of the building, were given to the edge of the sword. It was in this house that Bertha Daundelyonne was located. Her father had imagined it would be easy to remove her from the town from this spot, in the event of matters becoming desperate. He had, however, missed his opportunity, and now saw his daughter threatened with all the horrors of the night.

As the lower part of the building was forced, the defenders fought from room to room. The

Mayor, with his huge battle-axe in hand, was polled like an ox in his own hall, and fell covered with wounds. Sir Gilbert Daundelyonne, like the lion defending his young, long stood between his daughter and the crowd of ruffians who endeavoured to seize her, till at length he also was borne to the earth.

Whilst this scene was enacting, the Dauphin, attended by a brilliant assemblage of nobles, rode through the street in which the Mayor's house was situate, and took their way towards the gate-house at its extremity.

Glittering in golden trappings and gorgeous appointments, the gallant cortège formed a gay contrast to the ghastly and blackened crowd, now in all the freedom of unchecked riot, roaming through the town; and with all the hardihood of men whose avocation was war, they displayed the most perfect indifference to the dreadful scenes taking place in every foot of their progress. The cry of despair, the howl of agony, the deep groan, the dying execration, and the death-struggle were alike disregarded by that knightly throng; as, with lance erect and fluttering pennon, they rode

through the streets. Accompanying this party there was one knight whose bearing was remarkable even in the midst of the gallant warriors with whom he rode, his raised beaver displaying features so exquisitely formed, and a countenance whose expression was so truly noble, that, together with his graceful seat and gallant bearing, he seemed the prince of chivalry. He rode close beside the Dauphin, whom he had that day preserved from the sword of Faulconbridge.

As the gay party spurred their course past the house of the Mayor, they were stopped for a few minutes by the crowd of fierce assailants and plunderers making their way into the building. Amidst the dire confusion and hurly consequent upon the last struggle within the dwelling, a piercing shriek rang out.

To the ears of that knightly throng there was nothing uncommon in the sound, for cries of agony and distress were rife in every part of the devoted town, but upon the ear of the handsome cavalier who rode beside the Prince it seemed to produce a startling effect. Whe-

ther there was something in the accents of that piercing cry which was familiar to his ear, it is impossible to say; but as another and another followed in quick succession, the cavalier turned from the side of the Prince, spurred his courser amongst the crowd, and springing from the saddle, hastily forced a passage into the building.

Following the sounds of strife, which now seemed confined to the upper part of the mansion, he rushed up the stone staircase, entered the apartment from whence the cry of distress had proceeded, and beheld the fair Bertha Daundelyonne at the mercy of the course ruffians, now in undisputed possession of the house.

The apartment was filled with men of various descriptions belonging to the infantry of the Dauphin's power,—the rudest of the invading force—the very canker of the army. So radiant a creature as the English lady, now in their very grasp, had never before greeted the eyes of those swarthy savages, already heated with blood, excitement, and fierce passion; and the rage which a few short moments

before had been directed against the defenders of the house was now turned upon each other. A couple of bowmen, clad in half-armour, laid their horny gripe upon the unhappy Bertha on one side, whilst a black-browed Breton seized her in his rude grasp on the other. These in turn were torn away, and struck down by several common mercenaries, clad in heavy chain mail; and as more dark-muzzled Frenchmen crowded around to contend for the prize, she seemed on the eve of being torn to pieces in the struggle; whilst, to add to the terror of the scene, the torches which several of the assailants carried had set fire to the arras and hangings of the apartment.

The next moment the glittering blade of the Knight who had sprung to the rescue flashed amongst the torches borne by that unhallowed crew. It descended right and left upon the heads of the men who had already made prize of Bertha, and were dragging her from the apartment.

Like lightning the new-comer seized upon her, threw her behind him, and his blade and arm were opposed to his numerous foes. The

beaver of the Knight's helmet was raised when he entered the apartment, and as the fierce soldiers gazed upon his noble countenance, there was something so threatening in his looks, so commanding in his deportment, that for the moment, cowed and unmanned, they kept aloof from his sharp and glittering weapon.

But the fierce passions of man at such a time are like the whirlwind. No beast that ranges the forest is more fell than the excited soldier, in sight of his prey. They saw a follower of their Prince opposed to them; but their rage at being baffled took away all fear of consequences, and again they resolved to grasp their victim. "'Tis the Count de Chartres!" said one. "No," said another, "'tis Clothaire le Hardi, an English minstrel, a favourite of the Dauphin;—cut him down!"

At this moment a huge Breton stepped forward, and, brandishing his weapon, attempted to seize upon Bertha. "Hence!" he cried to the young Knight; "this is our prize; the capture we have fairly won. Sacre! she's mine own."

As the savage advanced, the young knight

snatched the dagger which hung close to his left hand, and, swift as a flash of lightning, smote him down. The blow, which was given with amazing strength and skill, took effect just where the hauberk joined the neck-piece of the helmet, and killed the burly Breton in an instant ; the hot blood pouring out like a fountain, as the Knight drew out his blade.

This, for the moment, again completely cowed the assailants, and with a strength and activity which, in one so slightly and elegantly formed, seemed prodigious, the youth cut a passage through the swarthy crowd, before they could recover from their surprise at his temerity ; and, hurrying the lady along with him, gained the stairs. Hastily descending with her to the ground-floor of the building he reached the street, ere his opponents could arrest his career. The whole occurrence had taken so short a time to enact, that the Prince and his attendant cavaliers, who had been delayed by the assembled crowd, were still in the street when the young Knight emerged with his prize. To place her on horseback, and commend her to the charge of one his companions, was but

the work of a moment. He then, at her entreaty, again rushed into the building, to redeem (if not too late) the old Knight, her sire.

The Dauphin, who had observed the Knight emerge from the building with his lovely charge, reined back his steed. "Mon Dieu !" he said, as he gazed upon Bertha, who, half-bewildered with affright, sat nearly helpless upon her steed, "but Clothaire hath brought forth an angel of light from yonder dark mansion. Parblieu ! if the towns here yield such specimens of female excellence as this, no wonder these English defend them so obstinately. Mort de ma vie ! if the place were not already three-parts fired, we would stay the sack of it. Some of ye follow Clothaire ; he is over-rash, and may come to harm." Thus saying, the Dauphin spurred his horse close beside Bertha, and, taking her under his especial charge, the party pursued their way out of the town.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ENCAMPMENT OF THE DAUPHIN.

This apish and unmannerly approach,
This harness'd masque, and unadorned revel,
This unhair'd sauciness and boyish troops.

SHAKESPERE.

THE sun rose brightly on the morning which followed the siege of Sandwich, and, as its rays disclosed the scene of devastation, a thin grey smoke and dancing heat, similar to that which proceeds from a reeking lime-kiln, the calcined walls of church, monastery, and tower, standing here and there in the midst, were all that remained of that once strong town. Seaward, upon the hills of sand which tradition still points out as the site of Cæsar's sea-camp, were to be seen the hastily-pitched tents of the Dauphin's power. Already, during the night, a part of the hostile force had poured over the surrounding neighbourhood like a scorching

pestilence, and plundering and burning farms, villages, and towns, rendered the fertile country, in their progress, one dreary and horrid scene of waste and desolation. And now, as trumpet and drum resounded over the grassy mounds upon which the camp was pitched, the main army was aroused to all the bustle of preparation. It would, doubtless, have much astonished the mind of a general of our own times to have beheld the dire confusion, and the prodigious crowd of attendants, camp-followers, and useless lumber attending a royal army in the middle ages; a scene of confusion and turmoil, which, however picturesque, amidst the splendour of feudal times, was so unlike the order, regularity, simplicity, and celerity with which the armies of modern days are conducted. As the sun shone out brightly upon the Dauphin's camp, and the forces were in all the bustle of preparation, in rear of the encampment were to be seen crowds of horse-boys, varlets, and attendants upon the numerous knights, running hither and thither, as if distracted. Horses, in gorgeous trappings, were being led forth and examined after their

voyage, and the affray of the night before ; and kicking, plunging, and running against each other, amidst oaths and execrations of their attendants, created a terrible scene of confusion. Carriages and wains for baggage were being extricated from the mass into which they had been jammed. Pack-horses, laden with chests, containing money, gold and plate, and even the gorgeous hangings and furniture of the tents, were being led forth ; whilst players, priests, cooks, and confectioners, barber-mongers, parasites, timbrel players, wandering minstrels, musicians and dancers capering about, made such a din that it appeared as if the Dauphin meant to hold a continued revel, and dance a galliard from one end of the distracted kingdom to the other.

In front of the encampment hundreds of knights, esquires, and young nobles, emerging from their tents, held converse with pages, clerks, and officers, "all glittering in golden coats," like images ; and in the space beyond that, and near the town of Stonar, were to be seen moving masses of heavily-armed horsemen, and large bodies of cross-bow men and

other bodies of infantry composing the Dauphin's army.

In a gorgeous tent, whose silken lining was powdered with *fleur-de-lis* and the armorial bearings of the Dauphin wrought in silver, sitting half-reclined upon a velvet couch, reposed that Prince himself. Several French nobles were in attendance as he prepared to rise and make his toilette. Whilst he did so, he relieved the tedium of induing his habiliments and arms by occasionally refreshing himself from the viands and rich wines served by those in attendance upon bended knee, his usual manner of taking his morning meal when in the field. The Prince indeed was a weak, unweighing, and trifling young man,

“ One, whom the music of his own vain tongue,
Did ravish like enchanting harmony ;”

his persuasion of his own wisdom, talents, and acquirements, being only to be equalled by the opinion he entertained of his personal appearance. He considered himself, indeed, as irresistible in the council and the chamber as in the field. Vain, even for a Frenchman, no flattery was too gross for him to swallow,

and, surrounded by sycophantic attendants, he generally had to gulp a decent portion of adulation during his morning meal.

“*Morte de ma vie!*” exclaimed the Count de Samblances, “but your Highness did indeed surpass yourself last night. *Sacre bleu!* I think you must have slain a round dozen of those island carrion after we gained the walls.”

“Did he draw his sword, think ye?” whispered the Count de Chartres aside to Samblances.

“Ah, by St. Denis!” said D’Argenteuil, “and what a glorious thought that was of sending for the Greek fire, in order to essay those hard-headed barbarians. *Mon Dieu!* ’twas a brilliant thought, and brilliantly it wrought upon them.”

“Nay,” said Samblances, “commend me to the device of throwing into the town the carcasses of our slain steeds; that thought was worthy of immortal Cæsar.”

“Holy Virgin!” said the Prince, “what would you have? these Cinque-port dogs rather raised my choler last night. Who would have supposed, Monsiegnurs, that so ugly a town would have cost us so many men and so much trouble?”

"*Sacre bleu !*" coincided the Count de Chartres, "your Highness speaks sooth. I was never more foully battered by canaille in my life than last night. Each low island caitiff doing duty on those ramparts was worth a knight of France."

"Apropos," said the Dauphin, "we must make a visit to that fair excellence which the minstrel Clothaire delivered from the hands of the Philistines. I thought, at first, she was the daughter of one of the portly burghers of yonder sea-port, but it appears, from what I gathered last night, that she is of some condition and celebrated for her beauty in the Court of the usurping John. Pardieu, my lords, we must gladden the disconsolate virgin in her misfortunes by favourable notice. By the way, De Belleville, you will take order for her being properly accommodated, as I intend she shall accompany us in our march. Nay, I will confer a visit on her to-day, ere we set forth, and endeavour to comfort her distress."

"Your royal condescension will doubtless be highly appreciated by the lovely English-woman," said the Chamberlain bowing; "suffer

me to adjust your Highness's scarf. But, perhaps, I shall be pardoned if I surmise that you will find no distressed damsel in the heiress of Daundelyonne, for such I hear is her name. On the contrary, the handsome Clothaire, who so opportunely rescued her, hath an absolute sway in the breast of the fair lady. By Cupid! if I may so judge, they seem to have met before."

"And the service so readily rendered to herself," said Samblances, "hath since received addition by the restoration of her father, by this same dare-all, whom your Highness delighteth to honour."

"Peste!" remarked the Prince, "that is something unlucky. We could ourself have rather relished offering service to one so fair. We confess ourself to have been somewhat stricken with the lady last night, she seemed a perfect miracle of beauty in her terror and distress. Clothaire hath the luck of it. He entrances all hearts. By the way!" continued the Prince, who being now fully equipped, seated himself to finish his morning meal, whilst those in attendance remained standing

aloof. "By the way, Count, I believe I never related to you the history of this singular youth."

"Never," replied the Count de Chartres, who being aware that the Prince loved to hear himself talk, pretended the most profound attention, although in reality he marked scarce half that was said. "It hath been your Highness's pleasure to heap honours and rewards upon this English youth during the short time you have known him, but, save that he is of obscure or perhaps base birth, we have no knowledge of his story."

"Your Lordship will understand," observed the Dauphin, "that I by no means think he is English born: his manners are too good—decidedly French; and for his being of base birth, I would hardly advise any Knight present to utter so much in the presence of Clothaire. He is of unknown, but I should think of not unworthy lineage. He is a sort of waif or stray in the wide ocean of the world, having been by some means filched from his parents and sold to one Ragusine, a notorious pirate infesting the shores of an isle near this kingdom, L'Isle de —"

“The Isle of Wight, your Highness doubtless means,” said Aubert, Count of Franconia.

“The same,” said the Prince; “where it is reported this bad John, whom, by God’s help,” continued the Prince, making the sign of the cross, “we mean to expel the land, was wont to amuse himself by associating with these banditti, even accompanying them in their plundering expeditions round his own kingdom. ‘Diantre, quel sacré polisson!’ Thus nurtured in earliest infancy,” proceeded the Dauphin, resuming his story, “this Clothaire became subjected to all the cruelties and hardships incident to the life his savage comrades led. He was cradled, Messieurs, amidst scenes of fire and slaughter. Eh, bien! you see, what a dare-devil he is—how fierce in spirit and how rash when once aroused; and had he continued to live the life in which his infancy was passed, he would have doubtless become a fiend incarnate. At ten years old, however, he changed his mode of life. He resented a blow given him by the ruthless Ragusine, and drove a dagger to his heart one night whilst in the Gulf of Venice. For this, Monseigneurs, he

was instantly thrown over board by the crew of the vessel. Eh, bien! The boy was not destined to be drowned; he swam like a duck, and succeeded in reaching a barque the pirates had been lying in wait for. Some Italian noble, who was on board this vessel, took a fancy to the handsome lad, and adopted him as his page. With him Clothaire learned those tricks of chivalry and minstrelsy for which he is so famous, and he accompanied his patron to Palestine. Returning thence after his patron's death, he again took to the sea, and retaining a deep and lasting remembrance of the atrocities committed by his former task-masters, he made fierce war upon the pirates which infest the channels, spoiling the spoiler. A tiger in war, he became a perfect scourge to these lawless men, till he was wrecked, and lost his vessel in these seas, and landed himself at Stonar, the very town at which we disembarked yesterday. This happened, Monseigneurs, just when the English army were about to put forth for France, what time John le Mauvaise was resolved to compass the destruction of the unhappy Arthur of Breton.

Eh, bien! To continue—becoming involved in some brawl amongst the citizens of this Stonar, Clothaire, to escape the consequence, turned soldier for the nonce, and accompanied the army of John from yonder Cinque-port which we had the satisfaction of burning last night.

“Such is the history of this youth, Monsiegn-
eurs; there is yet something more to relate,
but at the present moment I have talked
enough. ‘Je suis bien fatigué de vous tous.’
Parblieu, I will mount and look out upon this
swampy land of which we have just taken pos-
session. This England famous for fogs and
well-fed islanders. Sacrebleu! We shall burn
up their fields for them in our progress, for they
cannot fight—these English—unless their food
is tied about their heads as the nose-bags of
their steeds are fastened.”

“Before going forth,” said the Count de
Chartres, “your Highness will, I presume, give
audience to the English Barons who have ac-
companied us, and who having but now landed
are impatiently awaiting your royal leisure.”

“The English Barons, Messieurs, will con-

tinue there to await our leisure," returned the Prince. "For the next two hours we have our own private matters to employ our thoughts."

During the foregoing conversation between the Dauphin and his attendants, Bertha Daundelyonne occupied a magnificent tent, situated near the pavilion of the Prince, to which she had been conveyed by his directions after her rescue and escape from the town. The youth who had done her this piece of service, had also with some little risk and difficulty, succeeded in extricating the Knight her father from the midst of his foes ; and conveying him from the burning town, had caused him to be placed in safety in Stonar. The old Knight, although he had been borne to the earth by numbers and covered with wounds, was not mortally hurt ; and as soon as Clothaire had seen him properly bestowed in the monastery of the Benedictines in that town, he hastened to the camp to seek an interview with Bertha Daundelyonne.

Soon after dawn, he presented himself before the tent in which he heard she had been

located ; and sent to demand the favour of an interview. One who had so opportunely come to the rescue, he naturally considered had some right to make inquiry after the lady he had preserved.

To his surprise, however, he was given to understand by those in attendance upon the lady, that no person was to be admitted.

“Have you this from the lady herself?” inquired the Knight.

“Our orders are from the Prince,” returned the officer who was in waiting before the entrance.

“Such orders cannot extend to me,” said Clothaire ; “neither shall I obey them, unless coming from the mouth of the lady herself. Stand from before the entrance, sirrah.”

“Your pardon, Sir Knight,” persisted the attendant, “I may not disobey the royal order. I cannot permit you to pass.”

All further altercation was cut short by the headstrong youth, who impatiently putting the attendant aside, the next moment stood in presence of her he had so recently saved from death, or haply, worse than death.

The meeting was fraught with interest to both parties. They had much to learn, more to tell. To mutual explanation succeeded mutual vows; and the pair, although in reality previously so little known to each other, seemed to have been pledged from childhood,—“one heart, two bosoms, and one troth.” Bertha, who long had loved, and found that love had been but as a dream, now awoke to the reality. Her idol was no longer the shadow of a lover, The Minstrel, who had long given up all hope of finding the object of his search,—her who crossed his path like some meteor, in the night,—now saw himself in presence of the being his imagination had so long dwelt upon, and given up for lost.

The passion of one so fiery and impetuous as this youth, was like the unchecked torrent, and whilst he listened to the thanks Bertha poured forth for his recent service, he had the delight also of hearing from those lips, the startling intelligence that she felt almost certain of having traced his parentage.

Lovers thus brought together, enjoy an Eden of their own creation. To them the world,

with all that it contains, is nothing—the covering sky is nothing. They neither see, care for, nor covet aught but the present hour; unhappily forgetting that they are subject, like more prosaic mortals, to all the reverses and accidents that flesh is heir to.

“And you really, then, suspected me of deceit and treachery, lady?” asked the youth. “O, how could the most consummate caitiff practise treachery towards one so lovely? Listen; and I will again more fully explain the cause of your poor servant’s seeming fault. After you had so unaccountably vanished, and I myself was imprisoned, I naturally attributed your abduction to the King. After my escape, a rencontre with some emissaries of Raoul of Brabant seemed to confirm that suspicion. Two felon knights, in the service of that unscrupulous mercenary, were appointed to a rendezvous with the English King, whilst hunting in the Forest of Passeleu. Circumstances, lady, strange as curious, had made me a tenant of a lone hermitage in which their conference was held; and I learnt enough to possess me with an idea that they knew something of your

abduction, since they spoke in mysterious terms of a well-laid scheme to convey some lady of rank to England. On the departure of the King, I resolved to follow those men, and pluck from them their secret. Although I had fled from my prison, without arms or armour, Providence provided me with both. I procured a steed, and came up with De Brabant's emissaries, on the confines of Brittany, and encountering them, possessed myself of their secret papers. Suffice it, these letters guardedly worded as to the person to be conveyed to England, totally misled me. I followed the party to whom they referred, to England and traced the captive to the strong castle of Bristol. So much mystery was maintained, and so closely was the prisoner guarded, in that fortress, that for many months I in vain endeavoured to discover even the part of the castle in which she was confined. In various disguises, I tried to gain admittance within the walls, but failed. At length, in my own character of a Troubadour, I succeeded.

“The governor of the castle was proof against everything but the charms of music. He was

a Provençal, and I sang him the songs of the country he loved so well. Once within the castle, however, all egress was denied me; I found myself obliged to take service as a musician there, and my task was to season the sad hours of a garrison apparently appointed to watch a state prisoner with the tones of my instrument. At length, from one of their own guard, I learned the secret of their prisoner. Ah, lady! how melancholy to reflect that beauty and royal birth should subject their possessor to the inheritance of a living tomb. I but once gained access to her for whom this strict and guarded watch was kept up. Judge my surprise when I discovered the occupant of the cell to which I had introduced myself, immured in all her glorious beauty from the breath of heaven and the light of the sun, was Elinor la Bretagne, the daughter of Geoffrey Plantaganet, the sister of the murdered Arthur, whose dangerous proximity to the throne had rendered her a subject of hatred and fear to the English John. Ah! could I paint to you my feelings, my devotion, on beholding one so high-born and so lovely thus immured in hope-

less misery in this gloomy fortress! But I will not pain you by describing the Princess in her living grave. Suffice it, during the few short moments in which I was enabled to see the captive, I offered to aid her in escaping from the castle. The attempt was discovered, I was seized and condemned to death by torment: to be flayed alive. In brief, I evaded this fate, and fled to France, and whilst still endeavouring to obtain some traces of yourself, I attracted the notice of the Dauphin at a tournament held in that country; that Prince received me amongst his followers, and at Angiers knighted me. Such, lady, is my history since our eventful meeting."

The minstrel ceased, and sinking on one knee, took the hand of the lady and carried it to his lips. At that moment the opening of the tent was drawn aside, and the Dauphin entered.

He stopped for a moment on observing Clo-thaire, and seemed surprised, evidently expecting to find the lady alone. He gave the youth, however, but one glance, and in that look ruin

leaped from his eyes; and then, without further notice, he passed him, and entered into conversation with Bertha.

Princes love neither to be interfered with in their amusements, nor disobeyed in the orders they give. The demeanour of the Dauphin was haughty and constrained in the presence of a third person. Any of his suit in the circumstances in which the minstrel found himself would have immediately retired, and left the field open to the royal visitor; but the fierce Clothaire, to whose heart all guile and sycophancy were strangers, in place of feeling himself an intruder, looked upon the visit of the Prince with a suspicious eye. He forgot all but his strong love for and his right to the exclusive guardianship of her his valour had preserved from destruction.

After rising from his knee on the Prince's entrance, he stood erect and proudly in his presence, regarding Lewis with so steady a gaze, that the royal visitor actually felt uneasy in his presence; and after a few hasty compliments and profession of service towards Bertha,

finding Clothaire made no motion to leave the tent, he himself retired.

When Faulconbridge had succeeded in extricating himself from the floods of the Sandwich flats, he turned to observe the fate of those who the moment before had been his companions, but the desolate waters and the driving mist were all he saw. Not a vestige of those who had, up to that moment, successfully struggled with him through the dangerous passage, was to be observed. The multitudinous seas apparently had devoured them for ever.

But such was not exactly the case. The same wave, which the powerful horse he rode had but just been able to withstand, lifted the lighter palfrey of Adela from its legs, and the steed of her guide also at that moment rose with the swell. The rider had forseen the probability of such an accident when he cut away the heavy armour from his charger, and the animal, completely unincumbered by the weight of his iron shell, was well able to carry his rider bravely through the waters. The smaller horse of Adela was even better able to

swim with his fair burthen; and snorting and blowing as they rose on the surface, the steeds turned off to the right, and, as the wave passed on, struck out over the marches towards Richborough.

“Attempt not to interfere with the horse now,” said her guide, as he saw Adela cling to the reins in alarm. “Grasp firmly by the mane, and keep your seat. Leave the animal entirely to his own resources. I will manage to keep his head in the same direction my own horse is taking.”

“Nay, but we are leaving the beacon you just now pointed out,” said Adela, as she followed his advice, and clung to her horse’s neck.

“’Tis no matter,” returned her companion; “we could not now regain the road. The horses will of their own accord make for the nearest land; their instinct teaches them in such a situation to do so.”

At this moment the clouds rolled beneath the moon, and they were enveloped in gloom. The sea-bird screamed as he flapped past them; whilst, in the distance, rose the continued roar

and din of strife from the town they were leaving.

“My God!” exclaimed Adela, “but this is indeed fearful; we have surely turned, and are going out to sea. I can discover nothing around me but dark waters. How short a time is now given us in this world! How fearful the dark death before us!”

“Keep up your courage, Lady,” returned the guide, “and all will yet be well. The horses have turned; they have scented the fresh grass, here away on the left, a nearer point than that they first made for. ’Tis the further bank of the river Stour. Hold on firmly but lightly, and fear not.”

Her guide was right in his conjecture. The horses made for the bank of the river, whose course ran beneath the walls of Richborough, and wound round towards Sandwich. It was now only to be distinguished by the rapidity of its current, and, in a few moments, the animals were crossing it. The Cavalier now showed his perfect horsemanship, which had taught him the management of a steed, when in the water, as well as on dry land. The

under-current of the rapid river made it extremely dangerous to cross during the flood-tide, and the horses were puzzled, as they found themselves whirled about in its eddies. They turned with the stream, and would have pursued its tortuous course, and been again carried far out amongst the marshes, but the careful guide, bidding Adela still cling firmly to the mane, turned the head of his own horse, by the slightest pressure of the rein, towards the bank, and, at the same time, drew her steed after him.

Twice his charger gained footing upon the slimy bank, and twice he was swept back, nearly rolling over, and striking down his companion; and twice the rider brought them both back to a fresh attempt. Both his hands were fully employed in the effort, and nothing but the firmest seat could have enabled him to keep the steed of Adela from breaking away, or dragging him from his own horse. Once separated, and he felt that his helpless companion would be quickly lost to him for ever. At all events, he found that the bank must be gained speedily, if at all,

and he now again turned the head of his horse straight towards it. The gallant beast succeeded in planting his fore-feet upon the ascent, and made a desperate effort to land, but the slimy banks baffled him. As he felt the sharp spurs driven into his sides, the horse made a last mighty effort, and sprang into the deep mud. At the same moment, his rider pulled at the rein of Adela's horse, which, floundering at his side, reared, and fell backwards into the stream. As it did so, the Cavalier let go the rein, and, seizing the lady by the arm, threw himself from his saddle and, dragging her after him, sprang upon the bank, and landed safely.

Adela was now in safety, and, as she stood beside the Cavalier, there was no mistaking his noble form. He raised the visor of his helmet, and the well-known features of the Lord of Folkstone met her view.

Although even this situation was not without its charm to the lovers, there was still much to be done, ere mutual congratulations and explanations could be entered upon. The ruined and half-burnt town of Richborough,

which stood just without the castle, near where they had landed, was no safe place near which to linger, a large detachment of the French being in possession. Under these circumstances, the Knight set about trying to recover the horse of his fair companion, which had safely landed some distance down the course of the river. Succeeding in his endeavour, he assisted Adela to mount, and it was resolved to make for Dover Castle, with all speed.

Taking advantage of the vapour which at that period enveloped the marsh land, like a thick fog, they passed several parties in the road they traversed, and succeeded in gaining the thickets which led to the village of Wednesborough, unmolested; passed through the small hamlet of Casting, and dashed over the open wold towards Dover.

And who shall describe the feelings of the Knight during that moonlight ride? He felt himself the champion and protector of one without whose society, the fairest scene in nature was a sterile waste,—the “brave, o’erhanging firmament, but a congregation of

vapours." Each hoof-tread upon the distant turf might herald danger, perhaps death; and yet he would rather the form beside him should be indebted to his own right arm for safety, than have seen her surrounded by a host. Such is the lover; and whilst under the influence of that most fantastic of passions, a lovely scene passed through with the object beloved,—danger and adventure increasing the charm,—is never forgotten. How sweetly the moonlight slept upon the grassy carpet, on which the watch-fires of the Britons had burnt! How soft the rich woodlands of Walsdershire darkened upon their right! And how well did the exquisite form of the fair Adela, upon her steed, match so sweet a scene!

CHAPTER XX.

DOVER CASTLE.

All Kent hath yielded; nothing there holds out,
But Dover castle.

SHAKESPERE.

A PERIOD of some months may be supposed to have elapsed since the transactions recorded in our last chapter.

Short as was that period, events of mighty import had happened in poor, unhappy, and distracted England.

The Dauphin had spread his colours, and beat his drums over the land. Marching through Kent, he besieged and took the strong castle of Rochester, crossed the Medway, and, without opposition, reached London, where the assembled Barons tendered him their homage.

All the castles and strongholds in Essex, Norfolk, and Sussex had surrendered; and after mercilessly wasting these several coun-

ties, his army again returned to London; and, swelled with the forces of many of the revolted Barons, like a pestilential scourge again poured over the county of Kent in order to besiege Dover Castle, then deemed the key of the kingdom.

Judging from his former success, the Prince expected speedily to make himself master of this fortress. The degree of importance attached at that period to the possession of this splendid fortress, so renowned in the history of former times, was extraordinary.

Its battlements, seen from the lowest land on the opposite coast of France, were regarded with immense interest. To the mind of the common soldier of foreign parts the possession of those circling walls, towering upon their stupendous height, was considered tantamount to the possession of all England.

Reared on the summit of the cliffs, the castle contains within its circumference thirty-five acres of ground, on six of which are reared towers and walls, giving it the appearance of a small city. The massive keep projecting in majestic grandeur, and grey with age, in the

midst of its multitudinous defences; the rocky hill itself, on which the fortress stands, seems to bid defiance to the power of man. On the land side, and towards the sea, it descends in a perpendicular and fearful precipice of more than three hundred and twenty feet.

“The murmuring surge,
That on the unnumber’d pebbles chafes,
Cannot be heard so high.”

The mighty import attached to the possession of Dover Castle had caused the Dauphin to retrace his marches through Kent, in order to lay siege to it; and baffled by Hubert de Burgh, he wasted time there which might have been employed to greater advantage elsewhere.

The Prince, indeed, who was somewhat wayward and tetchy in temper, had so entirely set his mind upon making himself master of this fortress, that hastening on, he had somewhat surprised Hubert, many of whose forces were at the moment engaged in predatory excursions, ravaging the lands of the revolted Barons. The Dauphin made his approaches nearly in a straight line to the foot of the bridge, casting up a bank on the right side of

his works, at the sharpest part of the hill, where it begins to turn towards the north. With the chalk cast out of the line of approach, his miners raised a sufficient bank to cover the assailants from the dreadful showers of arrows poured on them from the towers between the cliff and the Constable's quarter; whilst the old Saxon ditch protected them from the archers on the north side until they approached the castle-gate.

Nothing, perhaps, which the mind of man can conceive could come up to the magnificent sight of the siege of this fortress. Let the reader picture to himself the splendid encampment of the foreigner in the valley below, gorgeous with banners and the tents of the English barons, together with the works cast up by the Dauphin, crowded with iron men; and then the towering fortress, its walls bristling with arms, the lion of England fluttering upon its grey Keep, and the gonfalons of the various knights and chieftains who commanded in each tower.

Let him then imagine those venerable Roman and Saxon trenches which circle the heights;

the soft breeze of June waving the long grass upon their surface, filled as they were with men-at-arms looking down upon the assailants below. Let him next cast his eye upon wall, and tower, and barbican glittering with knights and gentlemen in harness of the crusades, and in all the pride of their castle's strength,

“ Laughing the siege to scorn.”

So poorly was the King stored with friends at this moment, that Hubert, all popular as he himself was in Kent, had but a thin garrison wherewith to defend the numerous works, many knights and men of note, who ought, by virtue of the tenure by which they held their lands, to have been at their station in the castle, having failed to come in.

Notwithstanding these disadvantages, the faithful Hubert, rendered doubly vigilant by the peril of his situation, and obliged to place even the very servants of the castle upon the walls and towers, beat off the forces of the Dauphin with terrible slaughter in every fresh attempt they made.

In no reign, when we take into considera-

tion the worthlessness of him to whom this great man owed his allegiance, has anything greater been done than this glorious defence by Hubert de Burgh.

It was in vain that the enraged Prince vowed he would lay his bones in the trenches ere he gave up the siege, using the most dreadful threats against every living soul composing the garrison. It was in vain that he sent the renowned Longspear, Earl of Salisbury, backed by upwards of forty English nobles, to endeavour to prevail upon him to capitulate. The intrepid Hubert had but one answer. "Go, tell your French Dauphin," he said, "that baseness and treachery towards one master, would be a poor recommendation to the service of another. Let him win the walls, and he will find Hubert de Burgh dead behind them."

To add to the annoyance and anger of the petulant Frenchman, at the protraction of this siege, he also experienced a repulse of a different nature. He had become desperately in love with the fair Bertha Daundelyonne, whom he had retained in a sort of honourable cap-

tivity ever since the night she had been rescued by Clothaire from the horrors of the siege of Sandwich. To all his advances, however, the lady had replied with the utmost indignation. The royal lover, who considered himself too high-born to be repulsed by the daughter of a Kentish knight was terribly indignant at this rejection of his suit. But he had to learn the crushing scorn in which the proud English maiden held even a prince of France, who, taking advantage of the accident of her capture, presumed to lisp words of dishonour in her ear.

Considering Clothaire his successful rival in the lady's affections, he had for some time treated that youth with marked neglect, and on the first opportunity determined to compass his ruin.

Matters of import had, however, so fully occupied the Prince up to the present time that he had no leisure to think of his own private affairs. Meanwhile the Knight of Daundelyonne and his daughter had remained prisoners in his hands.

To one of so high a spirit as Clothaire the

slightest change was apparent. The youth saw himself suddenly treated by the Prince with marked neglect, which was as quickly observed and imitated by the attendant nobles. He drew his sword upon the Count de Chartres in the royal presence, and on being reprimanded by the Dauphin, had the temerity to threaten the Prince himself. For this he was seized, thrown into a dungeon in the Abbey of St. Martin, standing in the meadows without the town, and condemned to death.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SOUNDING WELLS OF THE CASTLE.

Fluellen, you must come presently to the mines; the Duke of Gloucester would speak with you.

To the mines! tell you the Duke, it is not so good to come to the mines. By Chesu, I think, 'a will plow up all, if there is not petter directions.

SHAKESPERE.

THE ancient towers of Dover Castle took their names from the several knights and nobles who, at the time of the Conquest, and in subsequent reigns, were appointed to keep watch and ward in them. Of Valance Tower, Godwin's Tower, Peveril's Tower, Harcourt's Tower, Clinton's Tower, Magimot's Tower, Colton Gate, and many other of the more ancient buildings of the castle, hardly a trace remains. Their very names, like the knights who guarded them, have almost vanished from the memory of man.

It is night, and the moon shines upon tower, turret, cliff, and circling wall, of the fortress.

An armed figure, standing beside Harcourt's Tower, gazed upon sea and valley, cliff and town, as looking from the height he beheld the bright scene before his eyes, bathed in a sea of silver light. Harcourt Tower was erected near the angle of the quadrangle, on the south-west side, and over a passage inclosing the parallel walls leading from Peveril's Tower. In this caponniere, or concealment, stood a large body of archers, silent as death, their bearded faces thrust close to the slits in the walls, watching with jealous eye the slightest movement below. Their shafts at this point could command the ballium before the governor's apartment, should the enemy attempt to ascend the hill on the side next the town. The deepest silence reigned around.

The helmet of the officer who stood beside the tower partially concealed his countenance; yet through the raised visor it was easy to see that his features were of exceeding beauty. The Grecian nose, the bright sparkling eyes, and the small dark moustache covering the well-formed upper lip, appeared to advantage in the steel helmet with its noble crest, whilst

the surcoat and device upon his shield, and the glittering harness which covered his fine limbs, and which shone with every change of movement like the folds in a serpent's skin, proclaimed the wearer of knightly rank.

Suddenly the attentive ear of the Knight distinguished a light footstep approaching from within the arched walls. Quitting his position he advanced to meet the sound, and was joined by a lady, lovely as the Goddess of Spring. It is plain the pair are lovers; and amidst the uncertainty of war, the grassy trenches and the massive walls are to be the mute witnesses of their mutual vows.

“And you can then forget all?” said the maiden; “your own high station and renown for one so poor, so unworthy as myself; for one the history of whose early life was made up of neglect, grief, and misery, nay, perhaps of crime.”

There was something indescribably sweet in the voice and manner of the speaker, and in the expression of her lovely countenance, as she gazed into the face of the Knight beside her.

“I can forget all but my strong love for

thee, my Adela," returned the Knight, tenderly.

"Ah! but can you forgive as well as forget?" asked Adela. "Would you still wish to wed one who in your presence consigned herself to the care of another, and that other an outlaw, a common felon—perhaps stained with crime."

"I forgive all," said the Knight. "I forget all but the agony I have felt at thy loss—for then hope and joy left me, and the loveliness of earth faded from my sight. Life itself is hateful to me without thee, Adela."

"And such is the soldier," said Adela musingly, as she looked into the valley below. "In the midst of death and strife he dwells upon the joys of the world. We look around us here, and behold the dreadful devices of man for the destruction of his fellow. We see yonder fair valley filled with white tents, where thousands are enranked who thirst for our blood; and in the awful silence which proclaims the coming horrors—nay, whilst the weapons are pointed, which are perhaps destined to pierce our hearts, we talk of love."

At this moment the quick tramp of heavy feet was heard advancing from the souterrain-gate, within the fortress.

“Hark!” said the Knight, “the Governor makes his rounds. We must part, dearest Adela. Quick, bless me with your answer—say you will be mine.”

“I do,” replied Adela. “But remember! there are perils to be encountered ere we meet again. I go to save a brother’s life, whilst you——”

“Nay, you are to play my part in the scheme which you will not fully explain,” returned her lover. “Be it so; I take the part assigned to me. And when the moment arrives, yonder Frenchmen shall find enough to do in their camp.”

The next moment the lovers separated, and Adela joined the faithful Gondibert, who had been in waiting to escort her to the Monks’-gate, a building whose apartments were dedicated to many of the ladies in the fortress during the siege, and which being nearly opposite the tower over Eastbrook-gate, was secure from attack at that part of the Castle, as the

besiegers would be exposed to the archers in both towers.

Scarcely had Adeline left her lover ere the Governor, accompanied by several knights and men-at-arms, approached. He was making his nightly rounds.

"Who commands in this tower?" inquired one of the attendants.

"The Lord of Folkstone," was the answer.

"I give you good time of the night, my Lord," said Hubert, advancing.

"There seems nothing new in this quarter: all continues quiet."

"It does so," returned Lord Folkstone; "there has been no stir among the besiegers since sun-rise."

"I have my suspicions of this treacherous quiet," observed Hubert, "and have visited the sounding wells of the Castle. There is a mine at work somewhere, but we will find them out anon. We must descend the well in your tower here, my Lord."

In the middle ages the mining system was often adopted in sieges, mines of great extent being carried under the walls and towers of

the fortresses. At Dover Castle there are several sounding wells, for the purpose of letting down persons to listen if miners were at work.

At this period a curious species of punishment was often resorted to, in connexion with these sounding wells. As it was extremely dangerous to descend, without first making trial of the air in their horrible depths, it was customary to compel criminals, condemned for some breach of trust or treachery, to adventure first. If the unhappy wretch survived, the service was considered an extenuation of the crime.

When Hubert, together with Lord Folkstone and their attendants, had descended into the vault beneath the tower, and the machinery had been made ready for descending the well, a couple of men-at-arms led forward a criminal whose arms were pinioned. The prisoner was a thick-set and extremely powerful, though somewhat deformed man. He was, indeed, our old acquaintance De Bossu. As soon as his arms were unpinioned, he was conducted to the edge of the well, and ordered to seat him-

self upon the cross-bar attached to the rope that he might be lowered.

The culprit advanced to the brink of the well, and looked steadily into its dark mouth, from which a dark steam seemed to ascend. Perhaps no other sort of punishment would have shaken his firm nerves; but after looking down for a short time he seemed to recoil with horror. "It is the mouth of hell," he said, shuddering, "I see the faces of those long numbered with the dead. Men whom I myself have sent to their account. Is there no avoiding this?" he asked, imploringly, turning and addressing Hubert; "I'd rather be placed upon the rack or flung from the castle-height into the sea."

"You must take the chance here," returned Hubert, "without one minute's delay. To a life of the blackest crimes, you have added the treachery of endeavouring to deliver the Castle into the Dauphin's hands. Descend."

"But Mauluc;" urged De Bossu, "I can reveal——"

"Nothing coming from the mouth of such a villain is worthy of credit," said Hubert;

“descend, sirrah, by the rope before you, or by Heaven I will have you cast down headlong.”

The ruffian saw it was of no avail to hold further parley ; he took the rope in one hand and a torch in the other, and seating himself, was lowered into the well, whilst the spectators watched the event in breathless expectation. The well was full two hundred and fifty feet in depth, and as the wretch descended, its horrors were rendered more apparent by the torch he carried. Above him all was dark, and as the flaring light danced about in the murky atmosphere, it gradually became like a twinkling star. At length, when three parts down, its light was no longer visible, and as the listeners bent over the mouth of the well, a rushing sound was heard, followed by a dull, heavy fall.

“His crimes are over,” said Hubert, “he has met with foul air ; we must cast down quick-lime.”

After this had been done, a light was again lowered, but this time by itself ; it reached the bottom without being extinguished, and then one of the miners prepared to descend.

Firmly secured to the rope, the miner had a

smaller cord given him with which he could make signal of his wishes; he was then lowered into the well.

When he had descended about half way, he made a signal to be allowed to remain stationary, and a quarter of an hour elapsed.

During this time the listeners at the mouth of the well could plainly distinguish a faint dull sound, deep in the earth—a sort of scraping noise accompanied by the sound of blows, so faint and dull as to be scarcely perceptible, and at length the miner pulled the rope as a signal that he wished to ascend.

“These cunning Frenchmen have a mine here,” observed Hubert.

“They have,” said the man, “it is meant for this tower.”

“How far do you judge them to have progressed?” inquired Hubert.

“Within about twenty feet,” replied the miner.

“So near!” said Hubert, “but ’tis no matter; I will circumvent them;” and the party ascended from the vault.

“My Lord of Folkstone,” said Hubert, apart to that nobleman, “we will take these cunning Frenchmen in their own trap. There is a passage which must nearly intersect their mine. I will break through and take every soul of them. Meanwhile, as there is doubtless a jealous eye kept upon your tower, you must take your chance in it, and keep all secret from the men under you.”

“But if the tower stands,” said Lord Folkstone, I claim your promise to be allowed to head the sally we have agreed on, in order to aid our friends below ; I am pledged to it, to one you would not wish me to deceive.”

“I will not break my word,” replied Hubert. “If you live and my mind hold, you shall lead the party.”

“So that one way or other,” said Lord Folkstone, laughing, “I stand a chance of speedily paying a visit to yonder Dauphin in his trenches.”

“’Tis the chance of war,” returned Hubert. “Good night, my Lord.”

During the siege of Dover Castle, the Dauphin occasionally occupied a small building in

the town which had belonged to the Knights Templars. It was in this house that John, two years before, had given an audience to Pandulph, the Legate of the Pope, and had resigned his crown to him. Always of a wayward temper, the Dauphin, whilst his army was held in check before the Castle, exhibited symptoms of a stubborn and morose disposition, occasionally giving way to a violence of temper which made those who were about him as uneasy in his company as if they stood on the edge of a volcano. Towards the English nobles, who had been driven to the miserable alternative of inviting him over, his want of temper and tact especially displayed itself. On every occasion the Prince had shown a visible preference of his own countrymen, and the revolts, as they were termed, began to find their situation, whilst tending the steps of the foreigner, and fighting against acquaintance, kindred, and former allies, anything but enviable. Theirs was but a melancholy success, even when successful. Their eyes, after the toil of battle, were destined to behold the spoiled fields of their native land cumbered

with the carcasses of steeds and knights, with whom they themselves should have stood en-ranked against the invader. The rapacious wolf and the crow devoured the unburied body of the yeoman who had fallen by the sword of his own lord. The reeking pest which sprang from the field of strife was from their own kith and kin—slain in opposition ; whilst their reward seemed but cold favour and distrust from him they sought to serve.

Among others who began to grow dissatisfied with the behaviour of the Dauphin, was Wolstane Fitz Adda, with whom our readers have already been acquainted as the outlaw of Poicteau. This bold man, whose hatred against John had led him, since his return to his native land, to do good service to Lewis, claimed of the Prince neither lands nor dignities, but merely that his long-lost son, whom, through his friend Gondibert, he had lately discovered in the person of Clothaire, might be pardoned, and restored to favour. The Prince, however, was inexorable ; he was jealous of Clothaire, and although many of the English barons, who had formerly known Fitz Adda, had made it

their personal suit that Clothaire should be pardoned, he gave an abrupt and sullen denial.

“Your Highness,” remonstrated the Viscount Melun, on the day preceding that which had been fixed for the execution of Clothaire, “will do well to consider this matter. The Earls of Pembroke, Oxford, and Salisbury, have shown symptoms of displeasure since you refused to grant the son of the brave Fitz Adda his life.”

“The Earl of Pembroke,” replied the Dauphin contemptuously, “and the other barons may, perchance, require some one to plead in their own favour, ere long. For, hark’ee, Monseigneur, I like not traitors, even whilst I profit by their treason. Mountfoyt St. Denis, I swear that so soon as my foot is more firmly planted on this English land, I will weed out these overweening barons, root and branch. Their whole families will I exterminate, and bestow their estates and dignities upon men whom I can trust—my own countrymen. Pardieu ! this Clothaire, or whoever else he may be, were he at liberty, would be another firebrand, like Hubert

here, whom it might take us too much time and trouble to quench. *Mort de ma vie !* 'tis a terrible spirit. I marvel, Monseigneur, you can so easily forget how his lance struck you from your saddle in the lists of Chinon, in Touraine. *Mort de ma vie !*—you rolled upon the plain as if shot from a catapult.”

“I bear not ill-will to the brave, before whom my arm has failed,” returned the Viscount Melun. “And does your Highness mean to execute the brother of Hubert de Burgh the same day ?”

“Unless yonder fortress be delivered,” said the Dauphin, “the brother of its governor dies.”

“And what terms does your Highness grant the garrison ?” inquired the Viscount Melun.

“None whatever,” answered the Dauphin ; “unconditional surrender. By heaven ! I will massacre every man, woman, and child in that pestilent fortress. Let a messenger be despatched to Hubert de Burgh with this message. The catiff Mauluc, who hath deserted the falling fortunes of John, in order to curry favour with ourself, will be a fitting messenger.

Let him mark well the state of the fortress whilst there."

Since the arrest and confinement of the youthful Clothaire, he had remained in a state of the deepest grief and misery. With his vows of love returned, his parentage discovered,—happiness just within his reach,—he had been suddenly snatched from the world and its brightest joys, and plunged into a dungeon beneath the gloomy cloister of the Abbey of St. Mary.

The Dauphin had displayed a paltry spirit towards one he had so lately admired, and upon whom he had bestowed honours. But jealousy and sharp envy now haunted the breast of the Prince ; and when once these passions gain an ascendancy in the hearts of those who wear the diadem, they are generally fatal in their effects.

The accomplished Clothaire was doomed to die, and already the world seemed lost to him. Except that he was uncoffined, he was as one already in the tomb : next to being bricked up in the convent wall, to which its depths had often been the prelude, was the hopelessness

of his prison. In those days of splendour and active life, the reverse from the bright and open world to the cold dungeon was great indeed, and as Clothaire lay prostrate upon the chill earth he was a prey to the deepest grief. Days and weeks had passed whilst he remained in this situation, when one night his door opened and his jailer introduced into his cell a monk, accompanied by a youth clad in the costume of a page.

"These are the last visitors you will look on," said the jailer, "therefore, make the most of them; half an hour is all I can allow you;" saying this he retired.

The Minstrel started as the Monk raised the torch he took from the jailer's hand, and gazed around the slimy vault and then let its glare fall upon the features of the unhappy tenant.

"A miserable lodging," said he, "for one who had but a short time back a prince to profess regard for him; but men know better what they hate than what they love," and the Monk pushing back his cowl, displayed the countenance of the jester Gondibert.

“Ah!” said Clothaire, “art thou here? then is there hope.”

“None from the Dauphin,” returned Gondibert. “I am here in the character of your confessor: you die at dawn, so the Prince has willed it.”

“So soon!” exclaimed Clothaire, “but it is well; be it so. Could I but strike one blow for freedom I should die happy.”

“You may yet do so,” observed Gondibert. “Listen; for I must be brief: here is one who is ready to aid thee, and you have also friends without who will strike a blow for your freedom.”

As Gondibert spoke, he led his companion forward, and a brother and sister met for the first time since childhood.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TABLES TURNED.

But hear me this :

Since you to your regardance turn my faith,
And that I partly know the instrument
That screws me from my true place in your favour—
This your minion, whom I know you love,
Him will I tear out of that cruel eye,
Where he sits crowned in his master's spite.

SHAKESPERE.

HAD ambition still been the ruling passion of Bertha Daundelyonne she would have had an opportunity of gratifying it, since Lewis had become so deeply enamoured of her that he offered to shower titles and dignities upon herself and the Knight, her father, provided she would consent to entertain his suit. But Bertha had had quite enough of ambition; she looked upon the Prince's attentions as cruel and insulting, and continued to repel him with scorn. Repulsed thus, both in love and war, the Dauphin determined to try the

effect of severer measures than he had hitherto used. It was rather too much, he thought, after all his efforts against the heart of the fair Bertha and the walls of Dover, to be thus baffled. He resolved that the English were an obstinate race and must be treated accordingly.

The repulse he had met with from the object of his love affected him even more than his reverses in war. The presumption of Clo-thaire he considered excessive, and so was his thirst of revenge. His pride and self-conceit magnified the person, who he considered had obstructed his success and lessened his self-importance, into a monster of ingratitude. One evening, after a prolonged visit to Bertha, during which he had pressed his suit with all the vehemence of passion, the Prince's manner suddenly changed; he took a hasty leave of the lady, and with "jealous leer malign," descended to the cloisters of the abbey, where he continued to pace up and down for some hours a prey to the most gloomy and revengeful feelings.

The shadows of night still found him moody and meditative amongst the gloomy cloisters.

The dark and deathlike locality and the echo of his own footsteps, gave a more sinister turn to his thoughts. As the moonbeams partially illumined the dark arches and ivy-clad pillars, his thirst of vengeance, in place of giving way to better feelings in a neighbourhood so calculated to excite them, increased, and he determined to pay off the score which his littleness and vanity had been running up against his rival. Dismissing the mounted guard which attended him whenever he rode, and which had remained drawn up before the abbey-gates, he sent for Bertha and again held a long conversation with her.

“And how, lady,” he said, after a pause, “if I proceed to extremities? Remember you are in my power here.”

“The descendant of the Saxon Offa, King of Mercia, knows how to die,” replied Bertha; “she brooks not dishonour.”

“The proudest dames of France would feel honoured by my preference,” observed the Prince.

“One so happy in the favour and esteem of the ladies of France,” returned Bertha, “might,

methinks, dismiss a poor English maiden, and suffer her to depart with her father to her own home, if she still has a home in this distracted land."

"Your father, lady," said the Prince, "is a prisoner, taken whilst in arms against me. But 'tis vain to hold further parley with you, I well know the cause of my rejection: and by St. Denis I swear, that unless you relent in your cruelty, I will order this minstrel of yours, this Clothaire, or by whatever name he is designated, to be executed before your eyes."

"If Clothaire be really in your Highness's power," said Bertha, "you will display but a mean spirit in so doing: but I believe it not; neither will I credit, that one who fetches his life and being from the royal Charlemagne, would prove himself a monster of cruelty."

"Ha!" exclaimed the Prince, "and this to me, Lady! But, by Heaven! thy beauty might drive me even to greater extremities. Thou shalt see what I can do. What, ho, there!" calling to an attendant who waited in the chapel adjoining. "Let the prisoner Clothaire be brought before us strongly guarded."

As the prisoner was led into the cloisters, Bertha threw herself at the Prince's feet, and besought him to have mercy. "You cannot mean this, my Lord," she began. But the Prince was inexorable.

"I give you one minute to consider my proposals, Lady," he said, "or bid your lover an eternal farewell."

As he turned from her, the Dauphin signed to one of the men-at-arms to approach.

"Let one of the monks of the abbey be summoned to attend here," he directed, "to prepare the prisoner for death; and when I give the signal by raising my cap, do you strike the blow. If he resist, let him be hacked to pieces."

The man-at-arms bowed, and hastily withdrew. Again Bertha threw herself on her knees before the Dauphin, and solicited mercy.

"'Tis yourself must be merciful," replied the Prince to this appeal, "else, by the Holy Virgin, he dies."

Meanwhile the prisoner, who had stood quietly with the hood of his doublet drawn over his face, knelt down, and the monk pro-

ceeded to give him absolution. The spirit of Bertha had sustained her up to this moment. She hardly conceived the Prince would keep his word, and deprive her lover of life. But as she beheld the priest with all solemnity preparing him for death, she was struck with horror and affright.

“Alas, then, is there really no hope?” she said, as the monk rose from his knees; and rushing to her lover, she enfolded him in her arms.

The jealous rage of the Prince was still further aroused by this display of affection.

“Force them apart,” he said to the men-at-arms, “and do thou, sirrah, strike quickly—at once. Bury your weapon in his heart.”

“Stay,” exclaimed Bertha wildly, as the man-at-arms, his drawn sword in his hand, endeavoured to separate her from the victim. “Stay, Prince;” and she pushed back the hood from the head of the prisoner, and gazed with wonder upon the pallid features and clustering brown locks which fell in rich profusion. “Oh, God! ’tis not Clothaire.”

In the struggle, the prisoner’s doublet had

been torn from his shoulders, and, as the man-at-arms sprang forward and drew back his keen weapon in order to plunge it into the unhappy youth's heart, he suddenly stopped, and seemed transfixed with astonishment.

The Dauphin was equally puzzled. It seemed to him that a miracle had been wrought in favour of the object of his hate, or perhaps to save the religious edifice from being stained with blood.

To all appearance Clothaire stood before him; there were the chiselled features and elegant form of the youth. But in the long brown locks, which, falling over shoulders and neck, rendered even more dazzling the snowy bosom which the rude hands of ruffians had so suddenly revealed to view, the prince beheld

“A maid confessed in all her charms.”

However much the Prince felt astonished at this sight, and indeed for some moments his eyes were riveted upon the lovely form of Adela Fitz Adda, he had but little time for explanation or inquiry. A sound of strife and contention was suddenly heard without,

and the rapid footsteps of the armed guard within the Monastery were heard approaching.

At the same moment several shadowy figures suddenly emerged from what appeared to be a secret passage, whose entrance was at the further extremity of the Cloisters. One light and active form sprang like a panther on its prey, and waving his glittering blade on high, struck down the executioner, and the next moment was beside Bertha Daundelyonne. A few moments more, and the place was filled with armed men, and the Dauphin was for the moment a prisoner in the hands of Clothaire.

The sounds without now proclaimed that the camp and town were in a state of confusion. Far and near all was uproar, noise, and strife. The besieged had suddenly made a sally. They had emerged in considerable force through one of the secret passages of the Castle, and the Lord of Folkstone, at the head of a body of knights, sprang through the camp, and committed terrible slaughter; whilst another party succeeded in firing many of the tents; and the flames spreading, one quarter of the encampment was quickly destroyed.

The scene of strife and blood quickly extended. The siege, which for the last few days had seemed to be wrapt in a treacherous slumber, suddenly broke out in all its terrors. Ramparts, walls, and towers, trench, and mound, and slope, were now alive with actors.

Catapult, petary, wear wolf, and every sort of engine, began to play, and showers of huge stones and all sorts of missiles to fly through the clear air, whilst the different shouts and war-cries of the leaders pierced the night's dull ear.

The camp of the besiegers was in the direst confusion, which was for some time the more imminent, that a cry had arisen that the Dauphin was nowhere to be found, and that he was supposed to have been killed.

Whilst this scene was enacting in and around the camp, a singular conflict was at the same time going on deep in the bowels of the earth. The secret mine at which the besieged had been so long working, they had succeeded in carrying beneath Harcourt's tower. Having propped up its roof by beams smeared with grease, they were about to ignite these props,

and retire. Herbert, however, who had quietly watched their motions, had carried a counter-mine a little in their rear, and suddenly breaking through pounced upon them, and a dreadful underground encounter took place, in which those who fell found a ready grave in the cavernous tunnel themselves had made.

Meantime, whilst the followers of Clothaire hastened to conduct the two ladies into the secret passage, through which they had descended from the Castle, that youth who had struck the Dauphin's sword from his hand, seized and unceremoniously dragged the Prince into the adjoining chapel.

"I might end this war, your Highness," he said, "by passing my sword through your body, or making you my prisoner. Such a piece of service might be rewarded by the English John. But I scorn to take advantage of one from whom I have received favour. Your Highness's hand hath conferred knight-hood upon me, and you are free. Fly, whilst you may. If ever we meet again, look to yourself."

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHICH ENDS THIS STRANGE EVENTFUL HISTORY.

Now is Cupid a child of conscience :
He makes restitution.

SHAKESPERE.

THE morning which followed the foregoing events found the French commanders in a state of the greatest fury. The courage and resolution of Hubert seemed the more provoking, that whilst they themselves lost their time before Dover, several of the English Barons, at the head of another army, had reduced the castles of Berkamstede, Hertford, Cambridge, Norwich, and Oxford, and subdued the greater part of the country of the East Angles. The Dauphin himself was in a transport of rage at the terrible slaughter Hubert had inflicted upon his army during this night attack; and again he swore, by all the saints in the calendar, that he would never rest till he had

satiated his revenge by the massacre of the entire garrison, an oath he found it much more easy to make than to keep.

A few days after Bertha had been rescued from his clutches, and conveyed along the secret passage from the monastery, a gay and jovial party were assembled in one of the principal apartments of the Saxon keep of Dover Castle.

After the lapse of centuries, and all the soul-stirring events this fortress has stood in proud grandeur to witness, the keep of Dover remains uninjured by the mutilating and reforming hands of man; and there are still characteristic parts of the building which point out the devices of our Norman ancestors to defend their strongholds when unable to meet their foes in the open plain. Elegance in their apartments was seldom sought after by the warriors of the olden time in the buildings they retired to as a last resource; solidity and strength of masonry, security for themselves and stores, and concealed places for annoying the enemy during a siege being more germane to the matter. The company assem-

bled in the principal apartment of the Keep consisted of many renowned in their day for participation in this glorious defence, but whose names, and the evenescent symbols upon whose shields, have long been obliterated from the memory of man.

The stately forms of warriors, clad in their iron harness, and ready at any moment of alarm to fly to the walls, was relieved by the presence of youth and beauty, several ladies being amongst the throng.

The stern look of the aged knight, whose pent-house brow and furrowed cheek spoke of experience in former fields, and anxiety from the present hour, and who whispered apart whilst he watched from the narrow window, was varied by the joyous glance and lightsome laugh of the more youthful cavalier, as he held converse with the lady of his heart.

On this night, a sort of revel, or harnessed masque, was to be held in the principal apartment of the Saxon keep. It was a bridal entertainment, which the brave Governor had determined to give in honour of the marriage of two of his officers; and, notwithstanding

the siege of the castle was proceeding with all its fury, the ceremony was to take place in the old Roman chapel of the fortress, at midnight.

The attempt at describing an assembly held in castle-hall under such circumstances, and at this gorgeous period, would be in vain. In our own more civilized and peaceful days, a ball so given, would perhaps be considered out of season ; but in the middle ages, “delightful measures and merry meetings” were oftentimes held amidst the stern alarums of war. The knights trod a measure in the brilliant hall in the very armour with which they stood amidst the hurrying-shower upon the walls. Bright eyes and soft glances were doubly expressive, when they were directed towards the proud hero of the recent conflict, who would perhaps be called from his lady’s side to repel the assailants in the breach ; nay, perhaps to fight, and fall in defence of her from whom he hurried. The very hour was more precious, the minstrelsy doubly sweet, which was enjoyed amidst the peril, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war. At the present time, every sort of device had

been put in requisition by the Governor, to add to the festivity of the hour, whilst not a particle of the accustomed vigilance of the garrison was relaxed. The knights engaged in the dance, were in an instant prepared for the walls, and even the two bridegrooms, whilst they conversed with the ladies of their choice, held themselves ready to exchange the soft glance of love for the angry shout of war without.

Amidst all the romance of such an assembly, however, perhaps our lady readers of the present day would have shuddered at the appearance of the apartment in which it was held. The floor was strewn with rushes; and whilst the measure of the dance was kept to the sound of drum and trumpet, in the absence of more peaceful instruments, the glittering armour of sentinels posted upon the flights of stone steps which led to the narrow opening commanding the gate without, showed the strict watch that was kept, even in the stronghold of the fortress. The wind from these windows or openings, caused the torches and iron lamps with which the apartment was lighted, to flare

in the autumnal night blast as it blew in streams and eddies through the chamber. But, indeed, comfort was seldom felt or thought of, by the great, in those early times; and even kings, as they sat at table, were glad to place their feet upon rushes, in place of the soft carpeting which is found under the board of a tradesman of the present day.

A slight description of the apartment will perhaps give our readers a better idea of the place which, whilst industrious scenes and acts of death were going on without, knights and ladies fair “tickled the senseless rushes with their heels,” within.

The thick-walled room, which extended from end to end of the building, contained two openings, or windows, on the south-east, and as many on the north-west sides. Those in the north-west were intended to defend the entrance of the gate, in the court below; and the besieged could command the whole space between it and the Keep, the besiegers being thus exposed to the arrows of a concealed enemy. The windows on the south-east side commanded all the space between the gate

and that portion of the building called the Palace, and the stairs leading to the vestibule; and it would have been a desperate and fruitless attempt for an enemy to have endeavoured to force a passage, as they would have sacrificed their lives, without vanquishing the besieged.

These windows, or loop-holes, were constructed in so peculiar a manner, that they deserve especial notice. The openings in the wall, on the inside, were about eight feet wide; and a flight of stone steps led up to the window, gradually diminishing in width to the last step under the loop-hole, which was nearly three feet. By these steps, built in the wall, the archers ascended to the windows, which were near the top of the room, whence they could fire upon those without, being themselves free from danger, unless they stood immediately before the opening. Accordingly, they took their station on one side, so as to annoy the enemy in an oblique direction; thus making dreadful havoc upon the besiegers, without being themselves seen.

By this contrivance, likewise, it was impos-

sible for the besiegers, after gaining the quadrangle, to shoot an arrow or cast a weapon in at the window, beyond the thickness of the wall; for, as the small opening was fifteen feet above the quadrangle, every arrow passed with an ascending direction, struck the arch and fell upon the steps.

In this apartment, so constructed and guarded, the cavaliers and ladies within the Castle, attended the "harnessed masque," or revel, given by the Governor during the siege. Masques and entertainments of this sort were common in the middle ages, though they were mostly of a religious character. At the present time, the principal guests took different parts in a sort of dramatic poem, which had been hastily composed for the nonce by the youth Clothaire, and in which Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table were presented, in such costume as could be hastily rummaged from the armoury, and trunk mails of the Castle. Bedonniere, the Constable, was enacted by Hubert de Burgh. The stately Arthur was personated by the Knight of Daundelyonne. The witty Boons

was taken by Gondibert. Oswian with the hardy heart, found a representative in Clothire. Esclabon, the disguised, was enacted by the sometime Outlaw of Poicteau, now Fitz-Adda. The Lord of Folkstone took the character of the "Brow without joy;" whilst Dodinel the wild, Ferrant of the hill, Abelem of the desert, the ancient Knight of the hollow deeps, Malios of the thorn, Agravain the proud, and other Knights of the Chapter, found ready representatives in those present in the fortress.

The characters were the more suitable to the representatives and occasion, that a slight deviation from the arms and costume of the knights was all that was necessary. The crests being exaggerated, and the surcoats, shields, and devices altered, and the actors were fully equipped for the nonce, whilst Bertha Daundelyonne and Adela Fitz Edda the two brides, as the princess Esclairmonde and Childesine the Forsaken, their merlins on their gloves, and attended by a brilliant court of love, as they were led forth by Clothaire and Lord Folkstone, realized in that thick-ribbed

apartment, all that poets could imagine of the early ages of knight-errantry.

An assembly of this sort, hastily got up and without the trouble of much preparation, frequently goes off better than the most formally announced and long-expected fête, and accordingly nothing could exceed the happiness and gaiety of the hour. The figures of the dance, the action of the piece represented, all were enacted to admiration; and if the mirth of the more youthful was a little too fast and furious, it must be conceded that where men had but few hours of relaxation from strict watch, imminent danger, and hard blows upon the ramparts, they were quite right to be doubly merry in the hall.

Amidst the bright and jovial throng, however, there was one whose Iago-like eye, as he stood upon the stone steps of the window amongst the archers and men-at-arms, glanced with malignant hatred upon those assembled; and he dedicated the entire garrison to destruction or captivity.

The villain Mauluc having deserted the cause of John in his fallen fortunes, had offered his

services to the Dauphin; and on promise of reward, had undertaken the perilous task of gaining admittance into the castle as a spy.

As well practised in disguises and tricks of deceit as a mountebank, Mauluc had successfully altered his outward favour, and by managing to gain service amongst the garrison as a common soldier, whilst engaged upon the walls and ramparts, and sheathed in armour from head to heel, had evaded discovery. De Bossu, who had also deserted John, and who had boldly presented himself to Hubert as a messenger from the English King, was to assist Mauluc in the plot; and as it was supposed the Governor would be fully occupied with the revels consequent upon the double wedding about to take place, the hour of its intended celebration had been fixed upon for the Dauphin's attempt at surprising the castle.

The plan was arranged for one party of the French to make a sudden onslaught upon the castle from the cliffs on the side next the sea, whilst Mauluc was to conduct a second into the heart of the fortress by the souterrain beneath Mowbray tower.

Secure in his disguise, this caitiff waited impatiently the hour which was to give those he saw before him to destruction; and although he had a few days previously missed De Bossu from his secret councils, he had no suspicion of his fate.

During the progress of the dance, as the Lord of Folkstone led his partner to a seat whilst he held converse with Hubert, a tall cavalier, who was neither in character nor had joined in the revels, advanced from the end of the room and seated himself beside Adela Fitz Edda. It was Faulconbridge, who, with Stephen de Pinchester, had succeeded in bringing a reinforcement of five hundred men, with arms and additional engines for defence, into the castle that evening. They had the good fortune to enter the castle, undiscovered, through the sally-port under Earl Godwin's tower.

"This is indeed surprising, Lady," he said. "After having mourned your loss for many months, you may judge of my astonishment at finding you amongst the guests here, and decked as a bride."

"Ah, Sir Richard!" returned Adela, "al-

though you deserted me in that dreadful night, yet there was one true knight, you see, who succoured the distressed damsel in her need."

"And for that service," said Faulconbridge, "he has indeed reaped a reward—a reward I consider not to be equalled by all else the world can offer."

The tone of voice in which this was uttered was so different from the usual joyous style of the Knight, that Adela looked into his fine countenance with surprise.

"You are scarce yourself to-night, Sir Richard," she observed; "'tis seldom such high-flown compliments proceed from your lips."

"True," said Faulconbridge, "I confess myself somewhat too blunt in my converse with ladies; but with thee, Adela, who art so different from the vain butterflies of the world, I feel as I have never before felt. Pardon me if I confess, now that we may perhaps never meet again, that there was but one woman in the world who could have enthralled the heart of Faulconbridge. That woman must have been what thou hast proved thyself, Adela,

undaunted amidst perils such as would have scared the hearts of many men; and yet gentle and unassuming, soft and beautiful. Such a one even I, rude soldier as I am, may mourn the loss of whilst life lasts."

"Nay," said Adela, much moved, "this is painful, Sir Richard. Believe me there are many, high in rank and lovely in form, who would feel honoured by your preference. A brighter fate is before you. The noblest in Christendom would be glad to receive the addresses of one so renowned."

"Alas! no," returned Faulconbridge; "I shall never wed. A soldier's bright and brief career may be mine, and yet I look in vain for such a death as the soldier covets. A dark vision of an unworthy end at times haunts me amidst my most reckless hours. But a truce to these sad thoughts, so out of place at this moment. Farewell, Lady; my duties to-night take me hence ere yonder happy youth is to lead thee to the altar."

Thus saying, the gallant soldier took the small white fingers of Adela in his own iron hand and carried them to his lips. The next

moment he had vanished from the apartment. When Faulconbridge had left the gay scene within the Keep, which he felt in his present mood unable to enjoy, he passed the quadrangle and sought the fresh air of the ramparts. The spirits of the son of Cœur-de-lion were seldom long under the influence of melancholy, but at the present moment an unwonted sadness possessed him. Nevertheless, as he paced the walls, he sought to reason with his grief and chase it from his heart. Some such thoughts as the witty Biron gives vent to in his contempt of the blind bow-boy passed through the brain of Faulconbridge, and, had he lived in a later age, he might perhaps have quoted the lines of the reckless courtier:

“O!—and I, forsooth, in love! I, that have been
love’s whip —
A very beadle to a humourous sigh—
And I to be a corporal of his field,
And wear his colours.”

“St. George against St. Cupid!” he said, “’tis too ridiculous,” and, with his huge blade under his arm, he descended from the walls, passed on amongst those deep trenches and

works, even yet pointing out the hand of the Roman engineer and architect, and taking his stand upon the cliff which beetles over the sea, looked over the main of waters towards the opposite coast. As he stood upon the verge of the rocky height, he suddenly became aware of a suppressed sound, as if from some persons ascending the cliff.

When Cæsar made his first descent upon our island the waves washed the foot at this part of the height fronting the sea, and at the period of the Norman Conquest “the murmuring surge” still chafed the beach immediately below.

At first, Faulconbridge imagined the noise he heard was caused by the dash of the sea, but as he continued to listen, the night being still, he plainly distinguished human voices in consultation, and immediately conceived that a surprise was intended.

At this moment the glancing light of several torches and the sounds of many voices in the direction of the castle, announced that the bridal party were on their way to the church situated in the old Roman trench, and as

Faulconbridge turned his head to observe them, he saw several figures hastily but stealthily approaching the spot on which he stood.

Drawing back, he stepped aside a few paces, determined to mark the movements of these suspicious-looking figures.

The new comers were four in number ; they advanced to a part of the cliff near which Faulconbridge had just before stood, and on which was reared a small parapet.

The cliff at this part was so precipitous that no watch was kept for some distance along it, and after stopping and cautiously looking around them, three of the party proceeded to uncoil a thick rope they had brought with them, whilst the fourth fastened its end by a crowbar fixed across the turret. They then hastily threw the rope, which at intervals was furnished with small pieces of wood, over the cliff.

As soon as this was done three of the party immediately separated, and were lost to sight in the gloom, whilst the fourth remained leaning over the parapet, as if watching for those

who were to ascend the height by this precarious ladder.

Whilst the figure was intent upon his employment, Faulconbridge advanced, and the next moment had him in his iron gripe.

Paralyzed by terror and surprise, the man was unable to make the slightest resistance, and hurling him to the ground, Faulconbridge, setting his foot upon his breast, placed his sword's point in the bars of his helmet.

"Your accomplices in this, villain?" he inquired, "answer quickly, or I pierce your brain."

With difficulty the man named three Brabançon soldiers of the garrison, and Walter Mauluc.

"Rise, caitiff," said Faulconbridge, removing his foot from the palpitating breast of the traitor, "rise, approach the parapet, and see if those below are ascending."

The man did as he was bidden, and by the vibration of the rope judged that several of the party beneath had climbed some distance up the cliff.

“ ’Tis well,” said Faulconbridge; “ now draw your weapon and sever the rope.”

The man shuddered, and hesitated; but whilst the towering form of Faulconbridge stood before him, he felt like an infant.

“ Cut the rope, villain,” repeated Faulconbridge, angrily, “ or, by heaven, with one blow I will sweep thee over yonder dizzy height into the sea.”

The soldier raised his arm, and cut at the rope. His own death, he felt, would, in all probability instantly follow the act; and so faint were his blows, that, after several ineffectual strokes, the cable still remained unsevered, and Faulconbridge, impatiently whirling his ponderous blade over his head, cut it through at a blow. A cry of horror, and a heavy sound as of many bodies falling, was immediately heard below.

“ Now hearken,” said Faulconbridge, hastily, “ I might send you after yonder crushed reptiles, or by revealing your treachery to Hubert de Burgh cause you to be hung up to the highest tower of the castle; but I will do neither. This lesson of to-night you will not

easily forget. Keep your own counsel, and remember I know you. Live, sirrah, and henceforth be honest."

The son of Cœur-de-lion turned as he spoke, and with rapid strides took his way to the ancient chapel in which Hubert and the bridal train were assembled. He reached it just as the nuptials between Bertha Daundelyonne and Clothaire le Hardi, and Adela Fitz Adda and the Lord of Folkstone were completed, and the parties were leaving the building.

At that moment the enemy made their assault, and the whistle of arrows and missiles and the din of weapons, and shouts and cries on every side, seemed to pierce the night's dull ear.

The swords of the knightly train instantly leaped from their sheaths ; and, after placing the ladies in safety, they hastened to the walls. It was fortunate that Hubert had entertained some suspicion of this attempt of the Dauphin, although he knew not the precise hour at which it was to take place. Consequently, the surprise was met by so ready a resistance, that, together with want of co-operation from those

who were to have climbed the heights, and made a diversion on the side next the sea, it completely failed, and wherever the French appeared, they were repulsed with dreadful slaughter.

Whilst some were slain in the dark, others were hurled back down the slope. A party, however, led by Walter Mauluc, managed to gain the high cliff fronting the sea, in the hope of finding there the friends who were to have met them. But the garrison made a sally upon them from the entrance into the castle, on the bank of the Roman ditch, and they were slaughtered to a man, Mauluc himself being taken prisoner.

The Dauphin, in the meantime, made a desperate effort to gain a lodgment in Albrinche's Tower, and for this purpose forced his way into the deep ditch of the north-east side of the castle. As the archers in the tower, however, could command a considerable length of the ditch, and near the opening in the galleries, there was a mæchecolation in the wall for pouring hot water, burning sand, and melted lead upon their heads, the Prince and his

party received so warm a reception that they fled with precipitation. This finished the attempted surprise of Dover castle, and, as the trumpets of the garrison sounded a flourishing defiance from tower, turret, and wall, the knights, nobles, and ladies, sat down in the large apartment of the Keep to breakfast upon the ample meal which had been intended to furnish forth the bridal feast of the night before.

We are sorry it is not in our power to describe this wedding-breakfast, the chroniclers of the period being found altogether silent upon the subject. But a few hours after its termination, and when the different commanders had retired to their several posts, Hubert de Burgh, accompanied by Fitz Adda, Stephen de Penchester, Gondibert, and two or three other Knights was observed to leave the Keep and take his way to Albrinche's tower. Here he and his friends held a sort of court-martial upon Walter de Mauluc, who was found guilty of the blackest treachery, and condemned to death.

Upon ordinary occasions Hubert could be

humane and generous to a fault, but when called upon to be stern, no executioner could be more inexorable to the criminal his hand deprived of life.

The crime of Mauluc was one which the safety of the garrison demanded should be visited by a terrible example. The letters of the Dauphin were found upon his person, and the evidence of Faulconbridge was conclusive as to his guilt.

The wretched culprit, whose spirit in adversity was base and pusillanimous, as it was insolent and cruel in prosperity, threw himself upon his knees and begged for life in the most abject terms. But Hubert ordered him to be carried to the top of the lofty tower through which he had invited the Dauphin to make the attempt, and with the Prince's letters tied around his neck, he was placed upon a catapult, and hurled headlong into the trenches below.

Our tale is now ended; and although it has been said by some witty writer, that all novels must conclude with the marriage of the hero and heroine, simply because all else would be

a relation of unhappiness and misery, such is not exactly the case in the present instance. The houses of Daundelyonne and Fitz Edda long flourished in increasing happiness and prosperity; and many pages might yet be written descriptive of the virtue and bravery of their descendants.

Gondibert long lived to utter his quaint sayings and harsh truths, and at length retired with his friend Hubert, ending his days at his castle.

The miserable end of John, as is well known, took place at the Abbey of Swinhead, and, if the monkish stories of the period are to be believed, was characteristic of the time and the man. He boasted that he would live to make the halfpenny loaf to sell for twenty shillings. Struck with the wickedness of the thought, the abbot of the monastery suborned a monk to poison him, which was done "on Saynt Luke's day."

END.



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